This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

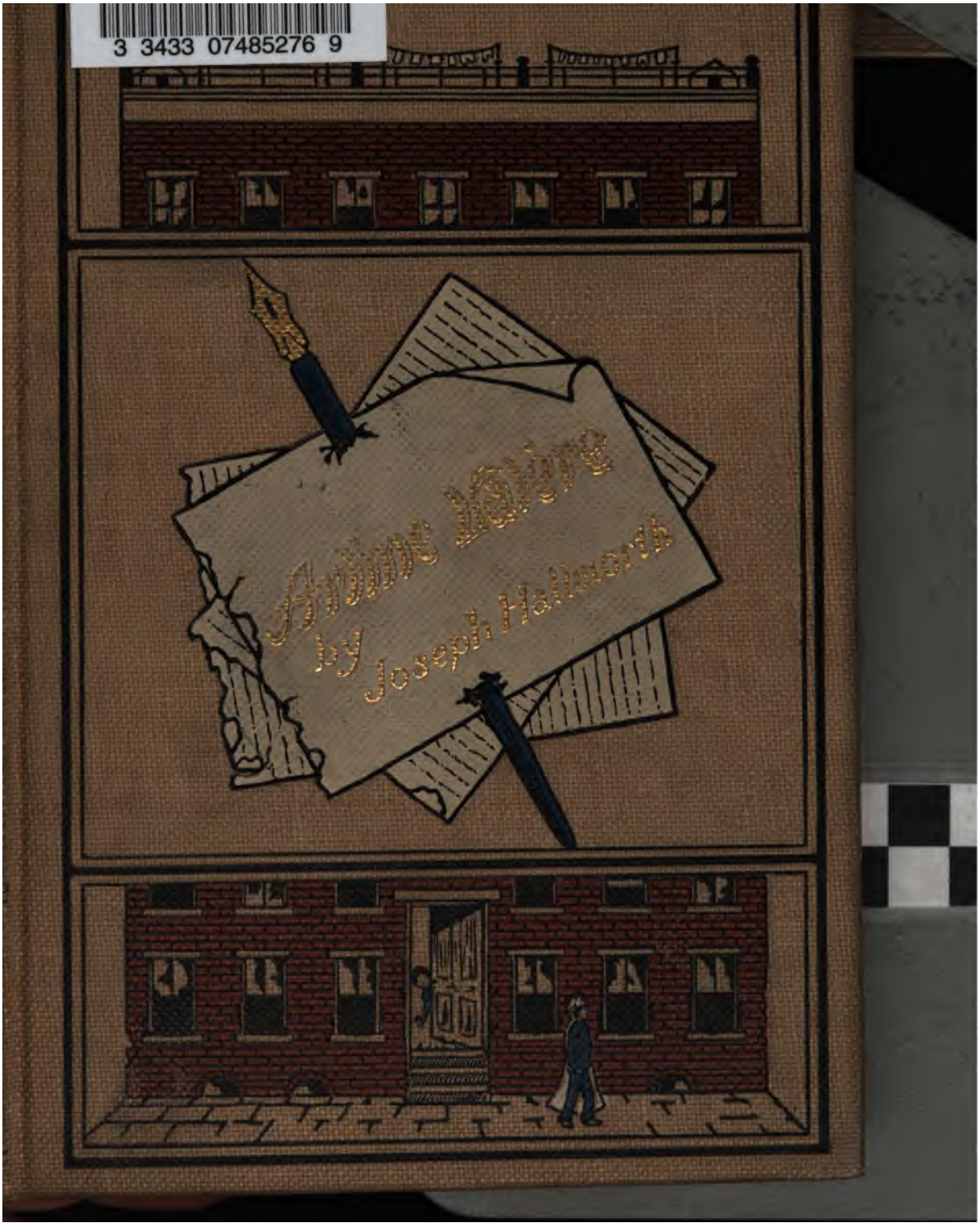
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3 3433 07485276 9



[redacted]

[redacted]

ARLINE VALÈRE

A STORY OF LIFE

ARLINE VALÈRE

A Story of Life

Reproduced in facsimile from
the Original Manuscript of

JOSEPH HALLWORTH

With One Hundred and Eighty Sketches
by the Author

Boston
L. C. Page & Company
MDCCCCI

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
304857B
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1945 L

Copyright, 1901
By L. C. Page & Company
(incorporated)

All rights reserved

Colonial Press
Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

LEAVES
FROM AN AUTHORS
NOTE-BOOK,
CONTAINING THE STORY
OF
Aline Lalère,
AND
ILLUSTRATED WITH
ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY ORIGINAL DRAWINGS
IN INK,
BY THE AUTHOR.
Joseph Halworth

Chapter 1.

"Monsieur Valère!—Artist!"—was the way the little old gentleman with the white beard and shabby overcoat introduced himself to Mrs. McFlicker, janitress of the tenement house at number something-and-six Broome Street.

Now Mrs. McFlicker's idea of "artists," was of the vaguest kind. She knew that they made pictures for one dollar down and ten cents a week until paid for, or that they would make them free if you would pay seven dollars and twenty cents for the frame, but more than that she knew not. It was therefore a matter of the utmost indifference to her whether the stranger was either an artist or a tin-peddler,—he wished to hire a vacant tenement, and as she had one that suited him, and he offered her the only recommendation she ever required, (a month's rent in advance) the rooms were let and M. Valère moved in.

The arrival of a new tenant at number something-and-six would ordinarily have been a matter of but small moment to the other occupants of said number, but whenever a tenant moved into that poverty-stricken district with more furniture than a broken stove, a few chairs, and a mattress, the curiosity and envy of the community was aroused to its highest pitch. This being the case it is small wonder that the arrival of M. Valère accompanied by a servant and

Copyright 1901 Eastcott - February, 1901

a large van-load of furniture should have been hailed with more than passing interest by the inmates of the tenement.

Such expensive furniture as it was too — mahogany book-cases, polished tables, upholstered chairs, and the Lord only knew what besides. It was the talk of the neighborhood. The old woman with one leg, who lived in the basement, hobbled up stairs to talk with her friend the cobbler's wife, — the woman who lived on the first floor and "sold frankfooters," had an argument with the widow that lived on the second floor and "did buttonholes," — the third floor tenants gossiped in like manner with those who lived upon the floor above, — and so on until the discussion reached from cellar to attic, and in fact even to the roof itself, for it chanced that several women were there engaged in hanging out clothes, and it cannot be supposed for one moment that two or more women can get together, — even at the housetop, — without engaging in the general gossip of the day. Even "Little Baggs," — the hired drudge of Mrs. McFlicker, — left the tub of clothes at which she was washing and went out into the cold hall, where she stood steaming, wondering, shivering, and dripping suds at every move.

Although the janitress took no part in the speculations and discussions regarding her new tenant, she was never the less by far the most anxious to obtain a knowledge of his private affairs, and with that end

in view had called upon him,— on different pretexts,— some half a dozen times within as many days. She thought that he might be in need of a hammer and nails, and called to offer them; but no, he had hammers and nails galore, and she retired. Again, the water was rusty, quite rusty; if he would let it run a little it would improve it. "Ah yes! Thanks!" he would attend to it,— and the door shut; and so on for several days, when having found out successively that he "did n't need a washwoman", that "the stove did n't smoke," and that "the water-bugs didn't bother him", she was forced to let him alone through having no reasonable excuse left for doing otherwise

To have met with such rebuffs would have discouraged most women; but in the case of Mrs. Mc Flicker they served but to whet her curiosity the more, and thinking of but one way by which she could find out that which she wished to know, she at once put it in operation and for three weeks strained her eyes and lamed her back in an endeavor to gather wisdom through the keyhole; and after all her patience and perseverance, found out only that which she might very well have discovered without having gone to such unnecessary trouble, namely,— that M. Valère could speak French, and that he had a companion or man servant who was an equally good linguist

Although possessed of but this mea-

gre amount of information regarding her new tenants, she was in nowise backward in answering the many curious queries of her other tenants in regard to them. To be sure she did not give them direct answers to that which they wished to know, but slaked their thirst for information by such ambiguous replies and evasive hints, as would lead them to suppose that she knew a great deal more than she cared to tell. Thus, upon being asked by her friend Mrs. Gobber (the one legged woman from the basement) as to whether "the old buck with the skim-milk whiskers, was a artist as paints ships and things, or only faces," she replied:

"Well now you be the most inquisitivest woman as I ever seen, an' it aint exactly right to be a axin' of <u>me</u> as is the janitress, what them as rents my rooms is a doin' of in them, but as you're an old friend of mine, Sally, an' knows enough to keep mum at what I tells you, I may say as the gentlemen up stairs (for they bes two of them, and they is both gentlemen) I may say as the gentlemen paints a'most <u>all</u> ways, but as to whether they is best on photygraphs or real pictures, it aint for me to say, but if you had seen as what <u>I</u> have, you would say that they is the most wonderfulest kind of artists."

As a matter of fact, Mrs. Gobber had probably seen fully as much of the new tenants as her friend, for it was her unvarying rule to take a short squint through the

afore mentioned key-hole every time she had occasion to pass by their door.

But peep and pry as they would, they could learn little or nothing concerning them, and as the days passed by the mystery surrounding them increased.

Both were seldom at home at the same time, for as soon as one returned - after being gone all day — the other would at once go out and remain away all night. Often times their door would open at midnight and M. Valère would creep softly down the stairs and out into the street. At other times he could be heard pacing back and forth in his room for hours at a time. Surely there never was another such peculiar artist as he, and the tenants wondered and whispered, and wondered again.

The theories put forward to account for his mysterious habits, were as numerous as they were dissimilar. One thought that he was a little daft, another, that he was a detective, and still another, that he was a French refugee — and so on until he had been adjudged almost anything under the sun. Even a bed-ridden old beldame, who lived in a rear tenement (and who had never been known to discuss anything other than the state of the weather or the price of beer) so far aroused herself from her accustomed indifference as to say, with a knowing shake of her head: "There's no use beatin' about the bush over that Velair fellow, and guessin' he might be

this or he might'nt be that. I know what he is, paintin' or no paintin,— he's a inventor. Yes sir-ree! just as sure as the price of beer has got to be rejuced, that man's a inventor, an' he's actin' just like my first husband,— him as invented the double-back-actin'-some —kind-of-a-fly-trap. Best man I ever seen until he started that pesky fly-trap, and then, — land sakes, neighbor, he gave up workin' and sot right down to "improvin' of it," he called it, but land uv life, it was as though they was never no end to the improvments on that fly-trap. It caught 'em alive fust, and then he tinkered with it a bit and it caught 'em dead or alive, an' then he fixed it so it drownded 'em, and then smothered 'em, an' the Lord only knows what it didn't do to 'em afore he quit a tinkerin and improvin' of it, and then when it was all but done, he had to go an invent some fool attachment, so as to make it ketch roaches, fleas, water-bugs, june-bugs, bed-bugs, and— sakes alive dear, I disremember what all it would n't ketch, kill or mangle, but howsomever that there trap kept him in such an unnatural state of mind, that he wouldn't have nothin' to do with nobody, an' couldn't sleep nights, and would get up an' walk an' walk, an' think, an' think, until he actually walked and thinked himself dead. Yes! dead at eight and twenty, and me a widder with no mortal means of support but a patent fly-trap and bed-bug attachment.—

Yes, neighbor," she concluded with a sigh, "I've been there, and I know the symptoms, and mark my words, that there fellow is a inventor."

M. Valère and his companion appeared to have no friends or acquaintances, at least no one ever called upon or enquired for them, and whenever they were out (which was the greater part of the time) they went in different directions, and wandered around from one street to another, in a seemingly aimless manner.

The old gentleman would be seen today in Harlem, tomorrow on the Battery, again at noon-day he might be observed at rest upon some rustic seat in Central Park, and with sad and pensive look surveying each passing face. Midnight would find him wending his way through the drunken squalor of Mott, Hester, or Pell streets, observing with quick but searching glance the faces of the many people whom he met.

Up one street and down another in a tireless quest, dodging a horse here and a car there, now entering some dark and dismal court, and anon peering inquisitively into the face of some half drunken wretch curled up in a doorway. There was no place so high and refined, no place so low and degraded, but that he might be found there. The worshipers in Saint Mark's saw him, and seeing him, wondered who he

was, so kindly looking, yet so sad, and pale, and silent. He either noted or heeded not their questioning glances, but having let his eyes rove restlessly o'er them all, went out as he had come, silent and unknown.

The keepers of low dives and dance halls often saw him, as he came to observe the many depraved and drunken denizens of their places. He haunted the tenements of the poor by night, and made visits to all the city's morgues by day, and scanned each pallid face. Slab after slab with its white and silent burden, upon which the water dripped,—dripped,—dripped, in an icy shower,—here an infant with folded hands and chubby little legs lies smiling, as though asleep, but the cruel drip,—drip,—drip of the chilly water tells that it is the sleep of death,—there lies the body of a fair young woman, life and beauty were hers but a few hours previous, but now,—the dissecting knife and possibly an unknown grave.—On,—on, he went, amid this evidence of crime and lust, drunkenness and poverty, despair and broken hopes, and having failed to find that which he sought among the dead passed out and recommenced his search among the living.

Whereere he went among the haunts of crime, debauchery and vice, his sad and kindly eyes roamed searchingly about, and all who saw him were filled with sympathy, though they knew not why, and unmolested

and unharmed he wandered on.

Mrs. Mc Flicker was in a quandary, for never before, during her experience as a janitress, had she had such a couple of mysterious tenants. Their sad expression, their silence and their nocturnal wanderings, all conduced to arouse her curiosity to its highest pitch.

Despairing of obtaining any information from M Valère, she endeavored to interview his servant, but finding that he was equally reticent, was again nonplussed. Surely, she thought, no janitress in the world ever had another such peculiar pair of tenants,— an artist who did not paint, and a servant who would not gossip.— Who ever heard of anything more improbable?

While in this state of aggravation and unsatisfied curiosity, she bethought herself of her friend Mr Potts, the collector, who called every month to receive the rent from the tenants, and resolved to tell him all she knew regarding her mysterious lodgers, and as he was a person possessed of an abundance of curiosity and some knowledge of the world, she had no doubt but that he could easily penetrate their reserve.

Now an excuse to call upon Mr. Potts was something of great moment to Mrs. Mc Flicker, whose regards for him were of the warmest kind. Not that she was by any means in love with him,— Oh, no! of course not,— that was impossible. For had she not told her late husband,— at least three

days before he drank himself to death,—that, if he should die, she would never love another. Yes, to be sure she had, and as I cannot or will not doubt her word, I can only ascribe her peculiar feelings toward the collector as the result of heart-disease, or some similar ailment, though had the shade of the late Mr. Tinkham McFlicker (or, "the angel one," as she now called him) been present, while his widow was making herself ready to call upon her friend, it would doubtless have been anything but pleased to observe what scrupulous care she took in making herself look neat and trim.

As to her personal appearance, she was certainly not handsome, neither was she particularly ill-looking, although a cast in one eye gave her a rather rakish expression. She was short and stoutly built, and a good guesser might have placed her age at forty, and not been far from right.

Having at last got herself dressed and scented to her entire satisfaction, and having taken the precaution to double-lock the doors and windows of her front room,—lest some inquisitive individual should enter it during her absence,—she was about to depart by way of her kitchen, or laundry, when her young drudge (or "Little Baggs," as she was called) stopped in the midst of her washing and turning to her, said,—"Please marm, I hate to ask it of you but mamma is very bad today, and what with

buyin' medicine an' some coal, an' money to the Spider on the furniture, there ain't nuthin' left an nuthin to eat, and so if you could please let me have some of my wages today, — just a tiny little of it mam, — instead of waiting till the end of the week, I would be very thankful mam."

This little speech, although delivered with great deference and humility, had the effect of putting Mrs. McFlicker into a passion "What!" you drab!" she replied, or rather, — screamed, "ain't I a deprivin' of myself to pay the likes of you, week after week, and you a shirkin' and spendin', and complainin' of you haven't got this an' haven't got that! Ain't I a payin' of you by the week, and don't you get it on a Saturday nights without a havin' to beg for it aforehand? If you says no, you lie!" and having emphasized the last word by a vicious stamp of her foot, she turned and twitched herself spitefully out of the room.

That the buxom widow had at least some little taste for art could be seen when she sallied forth onto the street, as her cheeks, which were naturally somewhat pale and freckled, — had been painted a delicate pink. She was evidently feeling in the best of humor judging from the way she smiled and smirked to her friends and acquaintances, while hurrying along to the office of Mr. Potts.

Chapter 2

Little Baggs might well have been taken for the Queen of soap and suds as she stood scrubbing, sweating, and steaming away at the tub-full of clothes,—and such a lot of washing as there was too,—the tubs were jammed with it, the boiler on the stove bubbled over with it, the basket was heaped with it, and still there was more. Bundles stuffed with it, bags filled with it and packages bursting with it. Under-clothes and bed-clothes, babies shirts and butcher's frocks, heaped up in one place and scattered around in another, a veritable whirlpool of soiled ~~linen~~ clothing, amid an ocean of steam and a spray of suds. Steam rose in clouds from the tubs and pails, while billows of it surged out from under the boiler-cover, and floating upward, rolled along the ceiling, and into the cupboard and out of the door-way, and rose and fell and eddied about until the room was filled with it, the hall reeked with it, the windows ran with it and even the walls sweated with it.

In this atmosphere of steam, and suds, and bedraggled clothes, Little Baggs was filling the place of her mother, who had worked and sweltered there before her until weary and worn with the toil, she had fallen ill and been compelled to stop.

As Mrs. McFlicker stamped her foot and left the room, the rub, lub, rub, of the

clothes, and the slop, slop, slop, of the water, was resumed, but when the slamming of the street door told the diminutive laundress that her mistress was gone, the rubbing got slower and slower, and the sound of the slopping grew fainter and fainter, until finally it ceased altogether as it blended in with the babble, babble, bubble, of the boiler.

Little Baggs was crying.

Standing upon an old soap-box in front of her tub, and holding a remnant of her tattered and bedraggled apron to her eyes, she gave way to the pent up feelings of her little heart and wept. As she stood there, wet and ragged, with her little body shaking with the sobs she could not stifle, and the suds on her arms slipping downward and dripping slowly off at her elbows, she seemed as sad, woe-begone, and friendless a little piece of humanity as could well be found.

She had stood thus but a few moments however, when she was aroused and somewhat startled by a kindly voice at her side saying; "Well! Well! my little lady! You can't be crying now? Surely you can't be crying?" and upon looking up she found that it was the new tenant who was addressing her.

"What! You were!" he continued as he looked at her in feigned surprise, "You really were trying to make those bright little eyes all red and swollen? Why dear

me! I'm sure you meant to laugh. I'm positive of it. In fact I can see you are almost laughing now. — There now! — There you go! I knew you would! Why, what a bright little washerwoman you are now! A veritable little Queen of the Tub, my dear!"

He had said all this so kindly and soothingly, and yet in such a sprightly and good-natured manner, that she found herself laughing and feeling glad without knowing why.

"Well! Well!" continued he, as he glanced around the room, "It seems to me that this is a very large wash for such a very small miss. Now you can't be more than eight. No, surely you can't."

"Please sir, I'm twelve," answered Little Baggs.

"Is it possible!" he returned, "Well! Well! Twelve years old, — and live right here, I suppose." he continued questioningly.

"Oh! no sir!" she replied, "I just works here, and lives up in Crabs Court."

"Ah! yes!" returned her visitor, "Crabs Court, — Crabs Court," he repeated as though thinking deeply, — "Let me see, — there is a store, — Yes, — if I am not mistaken there is a store at the corner of Crabs Court, is there not my dear?"

"No sir," answered Little Baggs, "there aint none on the corner, but there's a grocery next to the corner.

"Did I say <u>on</u> the corner?" he returned, looking slightly vexed, "Why, what a mistake I made to be sure. What I meant to say was, <u>near</u> the corner. That there was a grocery store near the corner of Crabs court, kept by a man named,—named,—let me see now, his name is,—is,—"

"Hackett, sir," spoke up Little Baggs.

"Why of course it is my dear! Thank you! Thank you!" he continued, as he stood stroking his beard and thinking. "Hackett —Mr Hackett the grocer! Why I had his name right at my tongue's end when you mentioned it! Now I've got a little parcel, —ah,—that is,—just merely a letter, my dear, that I would like to have left at Mr Hackett's store until called for, and as I am very busy myself, it would be a great favor ~~for~~ to me if you would just leave it there on your way home."

Little Baggs replied by nodding her head in assent, and he continued: "Now this letter is very important,"—here he took a number of envelopes, letters, and papers from his pocket, and placing something in one of the envelopes, sealed it up, and wrote thereon: "Mr. Hackett— Dear Sir; please keep this letter until called for, to oblige a friend."—"Very important my dear," he continued, "and now if you will just take this bill for your trouble, and say nothing about it, and give the letter to Hackett, and say nothing

about that either, I shall think you are a very good little girl, my dear. A regular charming little Queen of the Tub, my dear," and placing the letter and a five-dollar bill upon the washboard in front of the little Queen, who was too surprised to take them or even thank him, he nodded pleasantly several times and was gone.

Had Little Baggs' childhood taken her through paths other than poverty, drunkenness, want, and ignorance, she might have read or been told of the doings of elves and fairies, and have at once considered her late visitor to have been in some manner connected with those sprightly little people, but as it was, she could only believe him to be either drunk or crazy. For surely, she thought, no man in his right mind would ever give her five dollars for doing a little favor which she would gladly have done for nothing.

When she had somewhat recovered from her surprise she ran to the door, but her visitor had gone, and the hall was empty save for the clouds of rolling steam and old Mrs. Gobber, who was hobbling down stairs on her crutch; so returning to her tub she placed the letter and bill in her pocket and pinned it carefully up.

Then, into the suds, the washing and steam, to make up for lost time. Slop, slop, slopper, went the clothes in the tub, and babble, babble, bubble, answered the boiler. How she did work and how the suds flew; — onto the

floor with a spit, spit, spat, and onto the stove with a sizzle and hiss. What cared she whether it spattered or not,—it would soon be time for dinner and she could go home,—and wouldn't she stop at Mrs. Simpsons, the baker, and Weingold the butcher, and Hackett the grocer,—and wouldn't she tell the Spider to bring up a whole bushel of coal,—ah yes,—to be sure she would, and while thinking thus both suds and time flew so fast that the clock in the church tower over the way struck twelve before she knew it.

To don a ragged old jacket that was surely two sizes too small for her, and to put on over that, a moth eaten coat that was at least four sizes too large, was but the work of a moment, and then locking the door she placed the key in her mitten and throwing an old shawl over her head as she went down the stairs, she was soon on the street. Away she ran, with the ends of the old brown shawl streaming out behind her, and a hand tightly clutched on her precious pocket.

"Timothy Hackett & Co. Groceries," read the sign beneath which she first slackened her pace, and when at last in the store she ventured to open her pocket and take out the letter and bill.

Mr. Hackett was not in, but the "Co." (for she had long since come to the conclusion that the slim, red-headed youth who worked there must necessarily be the "Co."

referred to on the sign without) was behind the counter, so she gave the letter to him with the request that it be kept until called for. Then she bought some pickles, and sugar, and butter, and tea, and — but I dont know what else, though whatever it was she bought it and paid for it, and shoving the packages into the pockets of her coat ran out, and made a call at Mrs. Simpson's the baker, and from there to the butcher, and thence to Crabs Court, the Spider and — home, where she arrived in such a state of excitement, and bundles and lack of breath, that Mrs. Baggs (who sat crouched up by the stove) lifted her hands in astonishment and cried; "Child! Child! Where-ever have you been?"

"Been shoppin' and buyin', mamma," answered Little Baggs, who after hugging and kissing her, danced around the rickety table beside her, and with each jump brought forth a bundle or package from the capacious pockets of the old coat. Having at last got all her purchases piled upon the table, — and not been the least bit less joyful, or put out because the sugar had got into the butter, and the pickles mashed into the bread, — she threw her wraps upon the bed, and in a short space of time was as busy and deep in the midst of her preparations for dinner, as she had been in steam and suds but a few minutes before.

Mrs. Baggs could only sit and murmer, "Child! Child! Whatever have you done?" while her daughter patted her lovingly on the cheek and danced around from the stove to the table, and from there to the cupboard, and thence back to the stove again, until what with her dancing, and hopping, and skipping about, one would have thought that the reason that the picture of the red and green ballet dancer,— pinned against the wall— fell down behind the coal-box ~~was~~ for pure professional jealousy. However, her little mistress took pity on her and pinned her up again in her old position, where she continued to flutter and kick with every breath of wind.

Dinner was finally ready and Little Baggs and her mother sat down to eat, though in truth it seemed as though the former at least, did more talking than anything else. She had to tell all about how she got the money, and what a kind old man he was who gave it to her, and how "nobody knew nothin' about him, except that he was awfully rich and painted pictures what he didn't paint, and had a servant as wasn't his servant."

Mrs. Baggs shook her head as though she hoped that nothing bad would come of it, and said, "Child! Child! I ain't a long for this world, and whatever

I might have taught ye it ain't for me to say now as I can't argify with the past, but I must say that I have always brought ye up the best I could under the circumstances, and if the time comes,—as I feel it will shortly,—when I can't be here to guide ye, and say ye musn't do this and ye mayn't do that, I hope you will stop a moment to remember that I am still a lovin' of ye, and still a watchin' of ye, and if ye'll but stop to think of that, child, if ye'll but stop to think of that, ye need never be afeared of goin' wrong."

Little Baggs listened patiently to what her mother said, and then getting up, threw her arms around her neck, and for the second time that day was weeping.

Chapter 3.

Mr Potts' office, — which by the way, was also used by him as a bed-room, dining-room, kitchen, or whatever else was required of it, — was situated on Rivington Street, near the Bowery, between a beer-saloon upon the one hand and an undertaker's on the other, which location, — as he often remarked, — was "unsurpassed, and all that mortal man could desire," for drink, which was to himself at least the most natural as well as the principal necessity of life, could be procured at but a moments notice. But if drink was not desired, (which appeared to to him to be a most unlikely and unheard of occurrence,) there could be but one satisfactory explanation for it, which was that the undesirous one must be beyond all mortal longings, and in that case what could possibly be more appropriate or convenient than his other neighbor, the undertaker. Such were the location and principal conveniences of his office.

The office itself was one of the lower front rooms of a large, brick, tenement house, and being several feet above the sidewalk, was provided with some half a dozen or more stone steps, leading up to the door, whereon was tacked a small, black, tin sign, upon which was painted in gilt letters, "John Potts, Collector"

This name, — owing to the thinness of the tin, and the uneven surface of the

door,— had the appearance of reeling in half a dozen different directions, but this besotted aspect,—being an exact counterpart of the condition in which the owner of the name often appeared,—was at the most but a very slight and quite appropriate defect.

Upon either side of the door was a small window hung with faded yellow curtains, which were doubtless kept in position more for effect than actual use, for as a means of obscuring the interior from prying eyes without they were entirely needless, as time and nature had long ago joined forces and covered the glass with such a thick coating of dust and flyspecks that it now afforded ample concealment of its own.

The dimly lighted room within was divided through the centre by a sliding curtain, that hung suspended from a wire, stretched beneath the ceiling. In the front portion of the room near a window stood a small desk, which might, at some time long previous, have been a respectable article of furniture, but owing either to its long service or disreputable associations, had now become a pitiful looking wreck. The corners were jammed, the lid split, and the front and sides battered and scratched, but the most noticeable and deplorable thing of all was the loss of its two front legs. Originally having

four legs, it had by some unknown calamity lost one; but by dint of being correctly balanced and placed in a corner, it had made a brave stand for some years on the three remaining. But once again the hand of misfortune smote it and another leg paid tribute, then, having but two legs remaining, and finding it an utterly hopeless and impossible achievement to balance itself upon them, had fallen to the floor, whence it had again been raised to an upright position, and kept so by the aid of a stool inserted under its front edge.

This desk, a small stove and a broken chair, were the only articles of furniture before the curtain; behind it there was a small sink filled with a few dirty dishes and a lot of empty beer-bottles and sardine cans. Upon the floor, near the sink, was a small trunk, the hinges of which being off, its owner had with much ingenuity buckled the straps in front, and turning it around, now opened it up backwards, the straps acting as hinges. The only other article of furniture was a small bed shoved close up against the wall, and covered with a tangled wad of dirty sheets and tattered blankets, from beneath which came an occasional grunt and gasp that betokened the presence of some tired but uneasy sleeper.

A loud knocking was at this moment begun upon the door, but not being answered was repeated at short intervals accompanied by a series of kicks and these being at last heard by the occupant of the tumbled bed,—who was none other than Mr. John Potts,—he bellowed out to know what all the row was about, and being answered by Mrs. Mc Flicker,—for it was she that knocked,—he hurried out of bed. As he had not removed his clothes before retiring, he was under no necessity of stopping to dress, so going at once to the door ~~and~~, he opened it a small crack and glanced out. Being perfectly satified that it was indeed she, and unaccompanied at that, he threw the door wide open, and bidding her good morning, asked her to step in and be seated.

The widow needed no second invitation, and entering, sat down upon the broken chair and took a good look at Mr. Potts.

He was evidently about forty years of age, but owing to his irregular mode of living as well as his long and familiar acgilaintance with the aforementioned "natural and principal necessity of life," he had the appearance of being at least fifty. His hair and mustache were well sprinkled with gray,—the mustache being very heavy and

hanging in a perpetual droop, as though having been wet in the said "natural necessity" and then allowed to dry undisturbed

"Lor, me! Mr. Potts!" exclaimed Mrs. Mc Flicker, "If you ain't a sweet lookin' angel I'm blowed!" and "blowed" she must certainly have been, for Mr. Potts, as he stood leaning upon the mutilated desk, his eyes blinking with sleep, his hair on end, his shirt bosom in a soiled and wrinkled condition, presented anything but an angelic appearance. "What in the name of commonsense have you been up to!" she continued. "Look just as though you were almost dead!"

"Well I don't feel over lively," answered Mr. Potts, "but the fact is, I had a little business, — that is, — a — a — little deal with a broker who's a friend of mine, and gave me a dead sure tip on some stocks, and I got home so late that I've not had a chance to get much sleep, and so I suppose I do look a trifle rocky just at present."

"Well, these now!" returned Mrs. Mc Flicker, "I'm a always intrudin' on you, an' here I've come an' woke you up when you ain't hardly got asleep. I wouldn't a come no how ~~only~~ only they is a little matter of business as I thought would be best to tell you private like."

"No trouble at all! Glad you came!

returned Mr. Potts, who, going to the sink, commenced a hurried search for the wash-basin, but that useful article being buried under the miscellaneous collection of beer-bottles and sardine cans, and not knowing the exact spot at which to commence excavations, he was forced to do without it, and so catching the water as it ran took a hasty wash, at the same time keeping up a rapid but rather disjointed conversation with Mrs. McFlicker.

"Business," he continued, as he stood combing his tangled hair, "is the natural parent of the mighty dollar, and should never be neglected, yet the hungry tramp that stole a chicken and said 'business before breakfast,' could have been no relation of mine, for I can never attend to business upon an empty stomach, and so if you will excuse me for just a few moments, I will step in next door and get a small bite of something to eat." So saying he repaired to his neighbor on the right, and having procured his "small bite of something to eat,"— and which by the way, consisted principally of a large glass of something to drink,— he returned to his office.

After making a desperate but vain attempt to straighten and smooth out the creases in his shirt bosom,— which, to tell the truth, was on an almost impossible accomplishment, as it was always in the same wrinkled condition, regardless of whether he had worn it a month or a minute,—

he spread a newspaper over the top of the fireless stove, and utilized it as a seat while conversing with his fair visitor.

"La, me! Mr. Potts," sighed the widow, as she moved her chair as near to the stove as possible, "I've been a'most worrit to death by the carryin's on of two peoples as rented the tenement as the Finnertys was trun out of. The old man as hired it says as how he was an artist, but lor me Mr. Potts, he might be a juke or a princess by the fine fixin's of them rooms, such as carpets as ain't a hole in them, an' lace curtains as runs the whole length of the winders. Theres a feller with him as he calls Louis and says as is his servant, but for a truth they acts more like brothers than anything I knows of, and the way them two peoples carries on has just about driv me into prostrations, an' worn me into the grave," and she cast a pathetic look at Mr. Potts, who had lighted a cigar and sat puffing away at it, entirely unmoved at mention of her close proximity to her last resting place.

Failing to observe any expression of sympathy, she continued, "They is the most mysteriousest actin' peoples as I ever seed. They don't do no~~thin~~ paintin' or nothin', but just walks around from one place to another till they is all worn out, an' then come home an' walk,—an' walk,—an' walk,—until the Mc^Squaddles, as lives

in the tenement below them, gets that tired of hearin' of them that they is almost distracted. They may be honest folks enough an' it aint for me to say as they isn't, but such a ways of livin' aint natural, an' I'm just about worrit to atoms for fear as somethin's goin' to happen."

The widow's nerves must certainly have been under a great strain, for she had hardly finished speaking, when she clasped her hands over her heart and with a deep sigh fainted away.

Mr. Potts would have indeed been a man of stone to sit unmoved at such a time, but he was made of far different material and the sight of his fair visitor tottering upon the chair before him aroused him from his reverie, and he started up and caught her in his arms as she was about to fall.

Now as to faints or fainting in general, and the causes and characteristics of the same, I have no particular personal knowledge; therefore, I cannot state whether the symptoms exhibited upon this occasion were other than would ordinarily occur.

Owing to this humane and timely action on the part of Mr. Potts the widow's head fell upon no harder substance than his crumpled coat sleeve, where it rested in a seemingly most comfortable manner. She sighed softly several times

and then murmured a few words, the most audible of which appeared to refer to "undying love."

Possibly the thoughts of the poor widow were wandering back to her "dear departed," but if so her mind must have been just the least bit forgetful at that moment, for whereas the Christian name of the late Mr. Mc Flicker had been "Jinkham," the name she now murmured was "John,— dear John."

Mr. Potts was a man who had seen considerable of the world, and incidentally, several of the women resident thereon, and therefore was never at a loss how to act under the most trying circumstances. A person of less tact and understanding might have considered the poor woman to have been wandering in her mind and have sought to bring her to her senses by a douche of cold water, but he,— never. He just supported her drooping head as near his breast as the wimkled shirt-front would allow, and— kissed, — yes, actually kissed some of the artificial bloom from her cheek.

Now I don't profess to know as to whether Aesculapius or any of his followers have ever practiced, or even ~~followed~~ advocated, such treatment for a faint, but if not, they certainly neglected the most simple, as well as effective, restorative.

These tender administrations acted

like magic upon the widow, who at once returned to her senses, and would no doubt have recovered completely, had not Mr. Potts been so solicitous for her welfare as to repeat his operations, which so acted upon the delicate state of her nerves as to cause a relapse, which was only overcome by a most vigorous and unstinted application of his sovereign remedy. Now although he was not especially noted for his generosity, it can be said that in this instance at least, he was generous to an extreme, and persisted in his applications until she had quite recovered from her swoon.

It might be supposed that Mrs. Mc Flicker, having been restored by means of his administrations, would at least have expressed her gratitude by thanking him. But she did nothing of the kind, which leads me to suppose, that there is no accounting for the many peculiar whims and idiosyncrasies to which a woman, (and especially a widow-woman) with a certain heart trouble, is subject.

She was apparently quite indignant at the liberty he had taken with her charms, and rebuked him accordingly.

"You ought to be ashamed for life Mr. Potts!" she exclaimed, leaving his embrace and standing out on the floor, "To think that such a nice gentlemans as yourself would take advantages of

a poor woman as was fainted out of her senses! I wouldn't have believed it! And me as trusted myself all alone with you! La, me! They ain't no tellin' what you might'n't have done, and me as ain't a friend in the world but my good name! It's a wickedness Mr. Potts, an' I wouldn't have thought it of you neither!" and as though to add emphasis to her words she commenced to weep.

Mr. Potts, who was neither abashed by her words nor disconcerted by her tears, made reply, "that his only fault lay in his taste for beauty and his lack of self control."

"Ah, yes!" sobbed the widow, "I ain't a doubt but what you couldn't a' helped it, and would treat a'most any insensless woman in the same way."

Mr. Potts saw the drift of her remark and promptly made answer, that "such a thing could not possibly occur again unless there were more Mrs. Mc Silickers in the world than he was then aware of," and getting up from his seat on the stove he took a few steps toward her, which so frightened the poor woman, that she evidently forgot where the door was and rushing into the nearest corner in her endeavor to elude him, cried out, "Now John! — I mean Mr. Potts, — if you come one step near me I shall holler"!

Now as there is no evidence to prove that anyone heard the fair widow "holler", it is to be presumed, either that her scream was very faint, or that Mr. Potts kept his distance. Be the reason whichever it may, the fact remains the same, that when she returned home, half an hour later, her cheeks,—though still a beautiful pink,—showed neither traces of paint nor tears.

Chapter 4

Mr Potts had charge of the renting of several large tenement blocks in the district in which his office was situated, and went forth promptly upon the first day of each month to collect the rents, or in case of non payment to evict the tenants.

He did not appear to be a man whom it would be wise to trust in any affair in which a considerable amount of money was involved, yet the representatives of the estate for which he collected had always received the rentals promptly and were perfectly satisfied with his accounting, more especially as he was known to be very importunate in his demand for money from the many sick, starving, and poverty-stricken tenants in his charge, and had no compunction or qualms of conscience in regard to turning them out into the street in case of non payment.

It was about ten oclock, on the morning of a certain day of rent, that Mrs Mr. Flicker, chancing to glance out of the window, beheld her friend the collector, ascending the front steps. Now although I can see nothing to remark in such a simple fact, there <u>were</u> certain malicious and evil minded persons who intimated to one another, in all due confidence, that if Mr Potts had called at that particular tenement at any time since sunrise his chances of being observed from that same window

would have been equally as great.

Into the hall came the collector, into the steam, the reek and damp, and finally into the presence of Mrs. McFlicker, who, as she welcomed him to her apartments, looked as smiling and happy as—well,—as any other poor widow might.

"The woman as sold frankfooters", laughed and nudged her friend the widow as did buttonholes", and old Mrs. Gobber, true to her natural instincts, hobbled up stairs on her crutch and placed her eye to the key-hole, but her only reward for the trouble was the interior view of a dish-pan which her friend the janitress had kindly hung up on the inner knob for her inspection.

Mrs. Potts seated himself in a comfortable rocker, tapped his account-book softly with the end of his pencil, and gazed curiously about the room, while Mrs. McFlicker busied herself with arranging her monthly statement of "doors off," "windows broke" or in fact any and all damage that could by any possible means be charged to her tenants. The collector was indeed inquisitive and as his eyes roved from one article of furniture to another, one might have thought that he was an appraiser of household effects and was making an estimate of their value.

Before him stood a small centre-

table, upon which rested a plaster cast of a bandy-legged, cross-eyed cupid, who was clumsily pointing his bow and arrow at a crayon portrait of the late Mr. Tinkham McFlicker, which was tilted up on the wall opposite. Mr. Potts' mind was evidently centered neither upon portraits or cupids, or upon the green motto-card over the door, upon which a red-and-yellow angel pointed with a withered arm to the sentence, "Love Ye One-another," nor upon the book-case in the corner, containing a basket of artificial flowers and a single book, entitled, "The Angels' Guide, or an Easy Way to Eternity." In fact he did not appear to be interested in any particular ornament or article of furniture until his eyes rested upon the very old, but solid desk at which Mrs. McFlicker was arranging her accounts.

Perhaps he had an eye for the antique and was interested in its age. Perhaps he thought that among the many papers it contained there was something of value. Perhaps.— but there is no end to the reasons which he might have regarded it for, but the fact is, he was deeply interested in it, and the light on his greasy hat reflected it.

Mrs. McFlicker, having finished her statement handed it to Mr. Potts, who received it with many gracious nods and smiles and at once left the room to col-

lect the amounts called for.

When he knocked at the apartment of M. Valère, his summons was answered by the servant "Louis," (a very polite little man who appeared to be all smiles and bows) who upon being informed by him that he was the collector, and had come for the rent, bowed very low some half a dozen times, and throwing the door wide open, bade him enter and be seated. He needed no second invitation and seating himself in the nearest chair, got out his rent-book and incidentally took a glance at the beautiful and costly furniture about him.

A velvet-like carpet and lovely rugs upon the floor, beautiful paintings hanging upon the walls, and filmy lace curtains draped up at the windows. Chairs and tables of the costliest kind, books and plaster casts, and a beautiful bronze clock upon the mantle, while in the corner stood an easle, holding a square of canvas upon which was painted the partly finished portrait of a young woman. And such a beautiful woman too, with such ~~kindly eyes~~ a wealth of wavy brown hair, such a pretty laughing mouth, and such eyes;— surely no woman ever had such another pair of bright and kindly blue eyes as looked out of that canvas.

Mr. Potts was interested, and as he received the rent from Louis and made out the receipt, he tried to draw him into

conversation by making numerous suggestions and complimentary remarks about the handsome furnishings of the room, and references to art and artists in general, but without the least success.

"Ah, sir!" he exclaimed as he rose to leave, "I was always interested in art,— that is sir,— not in art itself (I'm too mechanical to appreciate art for arts sake) but in the accessories of art,— the pots, the paints, the canvas, the varnish, the brushes, and the m—m—models,— is where my interest lies."

"Yes! Yes! To be sure! Very interesting! Very charming!" answered Louis as he stood bowing and smiling before him.

"Now here's a picture." continued Mr. Potts as he stepped in front of the easle, "Here's a picture that is only partly finished, and yet is very interesting as it is. Now I am but a mere piece of mechanism, —a veritable set of wheels,— when it comes to judging of beauty, but never the less it seems to me as the accessory,— that is, —the—the— m— m— model, or the original of this portrait must be a very handsome young lady.

"Handsome!" echoed Louis, whose gay demeanor had given place to an expression of sadness upon reference being made to the portrait, "Handsome?" he repeated in a low but earnest tone of voice, "Aye, Arline was indeed handsome, she

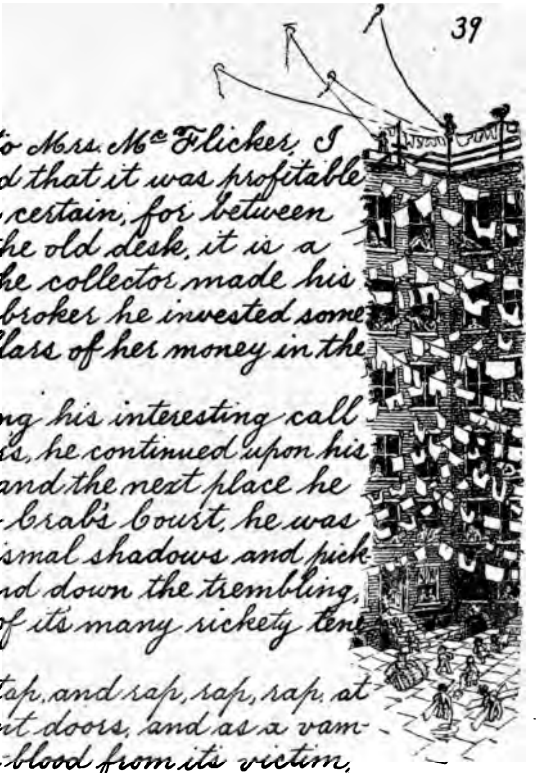
was good she was beautiful! Ah, yes, too good, too beautiful!" and he shook his head sadly and looking up at his visitor said, "Women with such faces are scarce sir, very scarce, in fact I don't suppose you have ever seen or know of a single one who would at all resemble this portrait."

"No sir, I guess I don't," returned Potts, "but I wouldn't object to knowing forty of em. Lovely girl, aint she? And her name is — is — or <u>was</u>, Arline. Did you say <u>is</u> or <u>was</u> sir?"

"Ah yes, to be sure!" returned Louis, ignoring his last question, "Very kind! Very beautiful!" and he then became so reticent and reserved that Mr. Potts was forced to retire without further information.

Mrs. McFlicker was anxiously waiting to hear what the collector had found out regarding her mysterious tenants, and upon his return to her room, performed the usual dish-pan ceremonial and then plied him with questions.

Now as to whether it was at all necessary for her to sit upon his lap while seeking such information, is a question that I am unable to answer, but that she <u>did</u> do so I am certain, and that her friend made no objection to such a proceeding is a fact of which I am equally sure. That the conversation they engaged



in was pleasant to Mrs. Mc Flicker, I have no doubt, and that it was profitable to Mr. Potts, I am certain, for between you and me and the old desk, it is a fact that when the collector made his next visit to his broker he invested some three hundred dollars of her money in the "dead sure tip."

After ending his interesting call at Mrs. Mc Flicker's, he continued upon his tour of collecting, and the next place he had to visit being Crab's Court, he was soon within its dismal shadows and picking his way up and down the trembling, rotting stairways of its many rickety tenements.

Tap, tap, tap, and rap, rap, rap, at a hundred different doors, and as a vampire sucks the life-blood from its victim, even so this tireless wearer of the wrinkled shirt and greasy hat, squeezes money from his tenants. Tap, tap, tap, the wolf is at the door. Aye, they know it, they are used to wolves at that door, aye, they may come singly or in packs, they know them all.— Hunger, Grief, Sickness, Despair, Misery, Rent, Want,—and a host of others. Rap, rap, rap,—another door,—who lives,—ah no, excuse me,—who exists within? The door's ajar, can you not see that Poverty exists here? Canst not see her in the whitened ashes in yonder grate, or in yon empty cupboard;

or amid that animated pile of rags that shrinks and cowers in the corner. Tap, tap, tap,—they are slow very slow at this door Age but they will be slower still ere long, for Sickness and Contagion entered here some time ago and now hold sway. Not much money here to be sure, even at the best of times, but now, —with the father God knows where, the mother and two babies lying sick and cold on yonder pile of rags, and several children fighting for a mouldy crust of bread,—but now, considering all this, the rent can surely wait a little while. Can it though? The greasy hat says not so; the wrinkled shirt front will not acknowledge it, and as for Mr. Potts,—well,—he is sorry, very sorry, exceedingly sorry, in fact his sorrow is boundless, but, —he is not the owner of the building, simply the agent, a mere piece of mechanism under orders, and those orders are, "the rent or the street"

Such orders are so simple that they can be understood without argument, and saving argument saves time, and saving time saves money, and saving money will eventually enable the heirs of Million and Billion,—who own these decaying tenement blocks,—to get back at least a fifteenth of one percent on their investment.—Yes, verily.

Onward, and ever onward, moves

the greasy hat, the wrinkled shirtfront and the mechanism. Tap, tap, tap,—rap, rap, rap, and the echo answers, rent. Tap, tap, tap—rap, rap, rap, and the echo answers, death. Aye, you may stand and rap, rap, rap, and tap, tap, tap, 'til thy fingers are as worn as the decaying door, and the door becomes as worn and rotten as thy employers heart, Mr. Potts, but you can collect no money at that door today.

The mechanism repeats the tapping and repeats it yet again, and receiving no response thereto, tries the door, and finding it unlocked, opens it and steps within. The room is chilly, damp and silent, and the light of a dull January day, or such of it as can enter the little well-like court without, struggles dimly through the frosty window-panes, and mingles with the gloom within, while the draught from the open door causes the picture of a gaudy colored ballet dancer, pinned against the wall, to flutter up as though to kick the red-and-yellow head from off the drunken woman in the comic valentine pasted up beside her.

Mr. Potts took no notice of these things, because the heirs of Million and Billion would not have noticed them, and he,—why, "he was simply their agent, a mere piece of mechanism." If it had been or could have been brought to their notice that the room was chilly, they would have replied, "just so! Perfectly right! Excellent!"

and would have at once produced a dozen volumes by as many different scientists, to prove that heat was conductive of sickness, and therefore the room in question by being without it, lacked the prime element of disease, and in consequence "they would have to add another dollar to the rent." If it was intimated to them that it was damp, dark, illventilated or in any condition other than first class in every respect, they would at once prove (to their own satisfaction, which was all they considered nescessary) that each detriment was coupled with an advantage that more than compensated for it.

Mr. Potts looks about him in the dim light and sees a woman sitting before him, her arms resting upon a rickety table and her head bowed down as though in sleep.

The greasy hat might think she was asleep, the wrinkled shirt-front might wonder if she was drunk, but Mr. Potts neither thought nor wondered, because — he was purely mechanical. "Mrs Baggs," he says, stepping over to where she sits, and refering to his account-book while tapping her on the shoulder with his pencil, "the rent is due! Six dollars in advance, and ten cents for the window as was broke makes six-ten, and fifteen cents for setting it makes six-twenty-five, and fifteen cents for a key as was lost makes six-forty. Six dollars and forty cents, Mrs. Baggs!" but she heeds not his words and stirs not

at his touch, for she has paid her last rent and sleeps her last sleep, — Mrs. Baggs is dead.

Mr Potts finds it out, and — is sorry of course Sorrow costs nothing and therefore he is very sorry, exceedingly sorry, and as he takes up his account-book and writes under the head of "profit and loss," — "Ten cents for a window as was broke, and fifteen cents for setting it makes twenty-five cents, and fifteen cents for a key as was lost, makes forty cents," — he was sorry again.

The death of Mrs Baggs was soon the only topic of discussion among the neighboring tenants, who not satisfied with merely discussing the fact, must all come crowding into the room to see for themselves.

The woman with twins of a week is there, the twins are there, the brothers and sisters of the twins are there, the father of the twins is there, and even the midwife who assisted at the birth of the twins is there. A drunken old pensioner, with but one leg, comes hobbling along the hall with an old mop-stick tucked under his arm for a crutch, and a penurious and miserly old grocer from the corner ran over and nearly killed an old woman in his desperate haste to arrive with a bill of thirty-six cents, which he had a vague idea might be collected by some means or other.

if he could but succeed in presenting it before the body was cold.

Mrs. Gupper (the mother of the twins) entered into a discussion with her nearest neighbor, and Mrs. Boozler (the mid wife) puffed a cloud of smoke from her pipe, and held an argument with the grocer, who waved his bill aloft in an ecstasy of despair and cried, "Lost! — Lost! — Lost by a minute!"

A doctor having arrived meanwhile, found in the course of an exhaustive examination that his prospective patient was dead, which remarkable fact, upon being communicated to those present, was received by all (save Mrs. Boozler) with nods of approbation and wonder at his knowledge and skill.

A fat and frowsy headed little man, having a red handkerchief tied about his ears, here pushed his way to the centre of the room, and taking off his hat produced a note-book and pencil therefrom and prepared to take a few notes.

"Ladies and gentlemen" he said, bowing low and making a graceful flourish with his note-book, "I am a seeker of news, — ~~a reporter~~ a searcher after interesting items, — a reporter of events, and the representative of the "Daily What," whose circulation at the present date is exactly two hundred and seventy-seven thousand one hundred and one copies

per day, — and increasing. Now I would like to know of any interesting facts regarding the lamented deceased." Here he made a second low bow, and such a wild flourish of his pencil, that it came within a hair's breadth of impaling one of the twins, and brought forth an angry remark from their mother, who, as she moved back with them out of his way, said, "Bless me body and soul, but can't ye see the children, you idiot?"

"A hundred years old and the mother of three children and an idiot," mused the affable representative of the "Daily What," who on account of having his ears tied up by the handkerchief had misunderstood her remark. "Ah! A very good item! A very good item madam! Very remarkable item in — d-e-e-d!" and having jotted it down in his note-book he looked up for the next "item", which was at once supplied by a remark of the drunken pensioner, who having become somewhat tired of the proceedings, braced himself up in the doorway, and while beating time with erratic flourishes of the mop-stick, sung in maudlin tones:

"I was born to r-r-o-vam
The wa-a-a-ter blue."

"Ah yes! Born in Rome and brought up in Kalamazoo. Excellent fact that! Very excellent and interesting item in — d-e-e-d" rattled the polite representative as he made a note of it. "Now sir," he continued, address

ing himself to the doctor, with his customary bow and incidental flourish of the note-book. "I have all the necessary information, except possibly a word from the eminent physician, Doctor"——"(Thomas O'Harold," prompted the doctor) "Tomasso Hairoil," wrote the scribe, who was here interrupted in his interview by a stir in the company and the whispered announcement that Little Baggs was coming.

This caused a hush to fall upon all present, and even the old pensioner forgot for the time being that he was "born to roam," and lolled back out of the way as a ragged little girl, with flying hair and white and tear-stained face, came running in and throwing her arms around the neck of Mrs. Baggs, cried, "Mamma! Oh! dear, darling mamma! Speak to me! Please speak to me, mamma!"

No one could witness the grief and hear the pleading of this poor little motherless child, without having his deepest sympathy aroused, and even the representative of the Daily What, as he sidled softly out of the room, bit the end of his pencil hard, and murmured, "Interesting item, but sad,—yes,—very, very sad item, in-d-e-e-d."

Chapter 5.

It has been a dirty, drizzly, slushy day in Crabs Court. Thawing all the previous night, raining all the morning and drizzle, drizzle, drizzle all the afternoon, till everything in sight is soaked and sodden with the wet. From the edges of sign-boards blinds and window-ledges, little streams of filthy water trickle off and come spattering down onto the sloppy pavements below; while from the eaves of the leaky and decaying roofs far overhead comes a seemingly endless and monotonous drip of melting snow, which falls with a rythmic pitter, pitter, pat into the numerous puddles of dirty slush within the court. Everything is wet, and cold, and cheerless, and even the tenants of the place, who are accustomed to misery in all its forms, are so affected by the dreary weather as to feel a few degrees more miserable than usual.

The old woman who stands at the entrance of the court and sells apples, has shifted her position some half a dozen times within the hour, in an endeavor to get out of the wet, and having found out at last, that she must stand either under the drip, or out in the slush, has finally chosen the latter misery as being the least, or best able to bear, and stands ankle deep in water, slush, and drainage.

Evening was coming on, and one by one, the lights in the many stores began

to glimmer up and throw their yellow glare through the rain-streaked windows and out upon the sloppy street and its throng of slipping and bedraggled pedestrians. From somewhere within the gloom and filth and chilly damp of Crabs Court comes the sound of muttered curses, mingled with the slop,—slop—slop, and spatter of the slush as someone ~~spatt~~ stumbles through it.

Out of the darkness and noisome vapors of the court, past the old apple-woman and into the yellow glare of light, shuffled a little, wrinkled old man, who appeared to be dwarf cripple and ugliness combined. He was a hunchback, not over four feet high, and with his large, frowsy head set low on his shoulders, his long withered arms, and legs that seemed to carry or drag him forward sidewise, with a warp shuffling movement, he appeared more like some horrible species of tarantula, or land-crab, than a human being.

"Ah! Spider! A nasty evening this" said the apple-woman to the hunchback as he stopped to look at some half a dozen notices tacked up on a nearby door-post

"Nasty evening? You goat! You rib of a Jezebel!" he answered with a snarl and the look of a demon. "Tis a fine evening, you limb of evil! A beautiful evening, for sickness, pestilence, death, murder

and robbery!" and as he produced a small notice from his pocket and nailed it to the door-post with a few spiteful blows of a rusty wrench, he continued. "Jar! You turnip! You imbecile! You hag of despair! If the mud was deeper than a mile and the eaves dripped blood instead of filth, it would still be a fine evening! A very devil of an evening, you imp!" and glancing furtively up and down the street, he shuffled and sidled back into the gloom and squalor of the court, while the old apple-woman, drawing her wet shawl closer about her chilled and shaking body, muttered, "He's a queer one, that's what he is!"

In a far corner of Crabs Court, — down a flight of ever-dirty steps, and in a dismal cellar, where the shadows hung so heavy that 'twas twilight at noon, and where dust, and dirt, and sickly vapors held sway in summer, and mud and chilly damp lingered in winter, and the demon of decay disported all the seasons round, — lived the Spider.

Where he came from originally, how long he had inhabited his present gloomy abode, or how he ever came to be appointed janitor of the several rickety tenement houses near-by, was past the knowledge of the oldest inhabitant of the court. His right name, — or what was supposed to be so by those who concluded

that he ever possessed one, other than the "Spider," — was displayed upon a dirt-begrimed wreck of a sign that dangled from a hook above the cellar steps. The sign was so weather-beaten, smashed and broken, that all that remained of its original legend, read: "T Grip Second-hand Fur" —

"Second-hand Furniture" was probably the original reading of the sign, as Mr. T Grip bought, sold, and traded for all manner of household effects, and also sold coal by the hod or bushel, and wood by the stick or armful according to the degree of poverty or affluence of his purchaser. His terms were "cash before delivery," and if the prospective purchaser had no "cash," he would kindly lend the necessary amount, — provided that he could receive security equal to at least ten times the value of the loan, and a rate of interest that would make a highwayman weep with envy.

It thus came to pass that if some penniless, half-frozen tenant was in need of fuel, the Spider would supply it, with the understanding that he held title to the stove as security, and within a short space of time the miserable tenant would find himself minus both stove and fuel

Thus, what with borrowing money for rent and food, and fuel, and a host of other ~~things~~ needs, the entire population of

the court had sooner or later become so entangled in the web of this artful wretch that there seldom happened an important event within the court,—from the birth of a child to the death or eviction of a tenant,—but that he was in some manner connected therewith. The burial of Mrs. Baggs had occurred on the afternoon of this same dreary, drizzly day and he had at once taken possession of the room and its scanty furniture as security for interest due on a loan, and Little Baggs would have been forced on the street, had not Mrs. Gupper (the mother of the twins) offered her shelter.

The Spider, after tacking up the notice, returned to his den in the cellar, where he shuffled about and muttered and cursed, to such an extent that the tenants above thought that he was either demented or had sold himself to the devil. It was not long however before a rap at the cellar door called his attention, and taking a candle in one hand and laying hold of a formidable looking knife with the other, he answered the summons. By the dim light of his guttering candle he beheld a nervous, hungry looking man and a young woman whose face, though pale and worn, was still of wonderous beauty.

"Ah! good evening sir," said the hungry-looking stranger as he doffed his

hat and made a polite bow to the Spider, who acknowledged it by cocking his head on one side and leering up at him with a diabolical grin. "I noticed," continued the stranger, "a card at the head of the court, stating that you had a furnished room to let, and I thought that if it was suitable I might hire it."

This information seemed to please the Spider immensely, for he wagged his frowzy head sideways several times, and grinning horribly, finally burst out into such a hollow cackling laugh, that the woman grasped her escort's arm and shrank back in loathing and affright.

"The room I have got," chuckled the dwarf, as he picked up an old lantern and shoved his candle within it, "is most certainly a suitable room. A lovely room! just the kind of a room for a lodging, or a home, or a murder, or a — Oh! no! I didn't mean murder!" he gurgled as his visitors drew back in horror, "married I mean! just the room for a married couple!" and with a final leer and chuckle, he led the way up the slippery steps, across the slushy court and into a rickety and decaying tenement house.

Up stairways that snapped and trembled neath their tread, and through halls where each loosened board upon the floor, gave out a separate groan,

the Spider shuffled, sidled, and dragged himself along before his visitors. Having at last reached the door he wanted, he unlocked it and throwing it wide open asked them to enter.

The room was very neat and clean, though sparsely furnished, a bed, a table, a couple of chairs, and a small stove being all the furniture it contained. The Spider shuffled over to a small closet or cupboard in the wall and got a lamp which he lit and placed upon the table, and then turning to his visitors who stood looking about them and discussing the room, he cocked his head to one side, rolled his eyes, and waving his murderous looking knife around, as though to introduce to their notice the room and its contents, said; "There now! Aint this a suitable room? Aint it a room as you would be proud to live in, or sleep in, or be murdered in, or rob — No! No! not murdered but merry, thats the word. Aint this a fine room to be merry in, to be joyous in, to be strangled in, to be — No! No! not strangled in, but — but — aint it a lovely room now, a very devil of a lovely room?" and he waved his withered arm and glittering knife about, and leered and laughed at the look of horror depicted upon the faces of his visitors, who were more favorably

impressed with the room and its cleanliness, than with their host and his horrible grimaces and allusions.

After a great deal of haggling as to the amount of rent, they concluded by hiring the room. The Spider counted the money several times to be sure it was right, and then, after ringing it upon the table and scratching it with the door-key, shoved it into his pocket and bursting out into his usual dry and horrible cackle sidled out of the room and with a final leer and ghastly grin went shuffling along the creaking hall, while his new tenants stood looking at one another, and at the room, and the furniture, and at a little red-and-green-paper ballet-dancer, that fluttered and kicked upon the wall near the stove.

Chapter 6.

There has been the usual sound of steam and suds at the tenement in Broome Street, and Little Baggs having finished her days drudgery, has gone slowly and sadly home to Mrs. Gupper and the twins, while Mrs McFlicker, having superintended the days washing and discussed all the latest gossip among her own and the neighboring tenants, is also through with her daily toil, and is setting the table, preparatory to receiving her friend Mrs. Gobber, whom she had invited to take tea with her. As a usual thing the table was set in the kitchen, but on this particular evening the front room was used, and the crosseyed cupid, being in the way of the dishes, had been removed from his usual position and consigned to a work-basket on top of the desk, where he lay in a veritable plaster trance, amid a confusion of thread, pins, buttons and a hundred other odds and ends.

The thump,—thump,—thump, of the crutch was soon heard in the hall as Mrs. Gobber came clattering along.

"Now what ain't you a gone an done Miriah?" said the old cripple as she hobbled in and sat down in a rocker. "You might think I was a queens or a princesses by the way you be a clutterin up of

this splendersiful room,— and it is a wonderin' fine room Mériah. A room as ain't ashamed of its equal nowheres. No! not even of them Velairses!" and as she spoke she glanced sharply about her, and then scratched her head thoughtfully with the end of her crutch.

"Now, Sally Gobber!" returned Mrs. Mc Flicker, who though pleased at the complimentary remarks of her fiend, always affected to be otherwise. "It ain't for me as is the janitress, to be a drawing of comparables between my own rooms and those of my tenants, but I do say as I have been told by a person,— mind I ain't a namin' of no names, Sally — I have been told by a certain person who has a knowledge of the — the — accessaries of certain artists — which particular artists it ain't for me to mention bein' as I'm the janitress — that this room is the most pleasantest room in the house."

Mrs. Gobber might have been laughing or possibly — yawning, but whichever it was she covered her mouth with the top of her crutch, till she had composed herself, and then, the tea being ready, drew her chair up to the table.

"Now it ain't for me to be a disputin' of words," continued Mrs Mc Flicker as she poured a cup-ful of hot water in-

to the sugar-bowl instead of the teapot, and if I'm told that this room *is* better than some others (as I aint alludin to) I shant deny it, and if the one as is now above ——"

"The one with the whiskers or the smiler?" interrupted Mrs. Gobber, referring to M. Valère and his servant.

"It's the angel one I'm referrin to Sally, — though I wont say as he's got wings or whiskers, though I aint a doubt but what he would have both if he wanted 'em, but if angels do have whiskers, it is to be hoped that Tinkham has cut his off, as they would be quite black, an' as I have read in a book called the 'Angel's Guide' (and which book is now here, and if you doubts I can read it to you) that, —

"Angels arrayed in wings of white
Shall flit through streets of gold."

and you see it would be attractin' toomuch attention on the part of Tinkham to be arrayin himself in wings of white, and then flitten up and down them Paradise avenues with his black whiskers, — but as I was sayin' Sally, that if the angel one above was here, he would not deny that this was a very nice room."

Mrs. Gobber nodded her head in assent, and commenced an attack upon a Dutch cheese, near her plate, while Mrs. Mc Flicker took a few sips of tea and continued.

"Its very seldom that I use this room for to eat in Sally, but circumstances have so transpired, that my conditions is to be elevated above what they has been and from now on my ways of livin' will be changed and likewise elevated, an the gentleman who is to do this changin' an elevatin' is to be Mr. Potts."

Mrs. Gobber paused with a piece of cheese midway between her plate and mouth and tried to look as though she was never more surprised in her life. "Well! Well! Miriah!" she exclaimed after a few moments, "I must say as I never would have guessed of such a happenings, though I have often remarked—to the peoples of this very house,—that it was a most meracalus wonder, as how a gentleman with such a edgicated knowledge as Mr. Potts, could keep callin an' callin' here, every month of the year without fallin' in love with the beautiful figger and dispositions of Mrs. McFlicker. For there's no denyin' or doubtin' Miriah, that your dispositions is a angels, and as for your figger — why they aint no comparisons as would describe it!"

Mrs. McFlicker nodded her head at the compliment and said as she stirred her tea reflectively: "It aint for me to say as my figger or dispositions is better or worse than some people as haint got neither, but I will say as the angel-one-above,

— meanin' Tinkham — which you can see his perfect likeness in that picture behind you, and likewise the frame which I paid seven dollars and twenty cents for — he, Tinkham, once said to me, Mariah there ain't no drawer, or painter, or skulper of marbels as can imitate your figger, and as for your dispositions, there haint tomasters, and saints, and seraphiums in heaven, as can equal it."

Here Mrs. Gobber almost choked herself to death with — well, — possibly with the cheese, but whatever it was she was forced to put her apron up to her mouth while she coughed and shook. Having recovered her composure and breath, she wiped the tears from her eyes and said; "I'm all of a fluster, Miriah, to think how asleep I am an' what little I know about whats a goin' right on under this roof, but I suppose it's all because it ain't my nature to be inquisitive like and pryin' around. Now here you be, right on the verges of bein' married and me not a knowin' of it, and then theres them Velaires with their mysteriouses ways of comin' an' goin' an' carryin'son, an me payin no attention whatever! Why I'm as asleep as a mummy Miriah, an' you — why they haint nothin' as can happen but what you knows of it at once!"

"It ain't for me to pride myself," returned Mrs. McGlicker, drawing herself

up, "but a woman as is the janitress should know what is transpirin' around her, and I may say, that if the angel one-above was here, he would not deny that if there was any transpirin' bein' done I would know of it."

"Just so Mériah, of course you would," returned Mrs. Gobber, who, having disposed of all the edibles in sight, began to feel rather pert and independent, "and only a few days ago, when I saw that old Vclair fellow come a prowlin' mysterious like around some rooms as was full of washin' and steam, I says to myself says I: Sall Gobber it is to be thanked your not inquisitive", an' when this same old Mystery goes to talkin' to girls as should be a washin', I says to myself says I: Mériah knows this and it aint none of my business no how, an' when he gives girls a letter to be left with Jim Hackett the grocer, till called for, and a five dollar bill for her trouble, I says to myself again says I, of course Mériah knows all this just the same as she knows everything else as is transpirin' around her, and what Mériah knows it aint for me to tell her, an' so I never mentions such things, but O! dear me! Mériah! it is just too aggravatin' for anything, for a person to be so asleep as not to know what is transpirin' under one's own roof. and she laughed and chuckled, and

finished draining the teapot.

Mrs. McFlicker was so surprised and flustered by what she had just heard as well as aggrivated at the manner of it being told her, that a coolness entered into the conversation, that soon intimated to Mrs. Gobber that it was time for her to depart, and as she picked up her crutch and hobbled out at the door she chuckled with surpressed enjoyment and said to herself said she, "I'm asleep am I, well look out Mariah! Sall Gobber sleeps with her elbows <u>these</u> days!"

Chapter 7.

The morning following Mrs. McFlicker's social tea found her early astir and impatiently awaiting the arrival of her drudge. She went about her work with such a clatter and bang as to show the irritable and vicious state of her mind. She slammed down the chairs, and jammed the remains of the Dutch cheese into the stove, then throttling the recumbent cupid, she gave him a couple of jabs in the ribs and a whack over the head with a ~~feather~~ feather-duster and slammed him down into his usual position upon the table.

Had she wielded a club instead of a duster, she could not have brandished it with greater vim or spite, or been more accurate in hitting what she aimed at. The book-case got a drubbing, the "Angels Guide" was belabored without mercy, while the red-and-yellow angel on the "Love Ye One-another" motto card, was so terribly mauled, that had it had any feelings at all, it must surely have wept a few red worsted tears. Even the portrait of the angel one-above was included in the general onslaught and was assailed with such a murderous determination that had it been Tinkham in the flesh instead of the picture, he would most certainly have been either killed or maimed for life.

It was while in the midst of this vicious exhibition of muscle and spite,

that her little drudge arrived, and prepared to commence her day's work.

Now in the whole course of her acquaintance with Mrs. McFlicker, Little Baggs had never been allowed to enter the front room, so to be called in there before she had hardly had time to remove her coat, was something of the utmost surprise to her, and when she entered and saw how excited and spiteful her mistress appeared, her surprise turned to fear.

"Now I just want to know what you've been a doin' of when I've trusted you here alone!" exclaimed Mrs. McFlicker, as she shut the door and stood with her back against it.

"Please mam," answered Little Baggs, as she shrank away, "I ain't done nothin',— not a thing, but wash, an' iron, an' hang up clothes, an'"—

"An' entice peoples into my rooms, an' run errands, an' shirk, an' lie to me!" interrupted Mrs. McFlicker, with a spiteful twitch of the feather duster by way of emphasis.

"Please mam, that was only ~~once~~ oncest, an' I couldn't help it mam, I really and truly couldn't, as he came right in an spoke to me an' went right out again in— in— almost a few minutes mam."

"Now don't you go to excusin' an' evadin'," snapped Mrs. McFlicker, as she shook the duster at her, "You just tell me

about that letter he was a givin of you, an' what you did with it, an' dont you dare to tell me one atoms of a lie about it neither." And as Little Baggs stood cowering and hesitating before her, she stamped her foot and cried; "Come now! Don't you be a standin' there a gappin' when I'm a speakin' to you!

"Please mam," came the slow response, "I ain't to tell anything about no letter or nuthin'."

"Ain't to tell!!" shrieked Mrs. McFlicker, in rage and astonishment. "Well of all the impedence and sass I ever heard! Ain't to tell!" and she actually got speechless at the thought.

She was in a quandary as to what to do. If she should discharge her, she would loose a good and cheap worker, besides she would gain nothing, and if M. Valère should hear of it, he might leave for another tenement, and her pride in having such a mysterious and wealthy personage in the house was such that she would have been willing to stand almost anything rather than have him go. Then it also occured to her that by keeping Little Baggs and watching her closely she would be able to find out all she wished to know. She had just decided to adopt this latter course when all of a sudden she was possessed of a brilliant idea.—Why not keep her all the time?

Why not let her make her home there? — Her parents were dead and she was homeless and friendless, and surely a chance to work for her board and clothes, and a chance to sleep in a nice warm kitchen, was an offer not to be refused, and she was so delighted and carried away by this [redacted] original and kindly idea, that she actually smiled and looked pleasant, as she said,

"If you ain't a goin to tell it ain't for me to say as you must tell an' it don't matter to me as to whether you tells one lie or a dozens, so long as you don't deny it. Not that I cares as to whether you be a lyin to me or not, — except that I did once promise a woman (that same woman bein your own mother) that I would be a friend and example to you. Now it ain't for me to tell [redacted] as how I'm puttin myself out to do it, or what a trouble and expense I'm goin to suffer by it, but I'm a goin to offer you a home, — a home, mind you, that has no equals in this house. You can sleep in the other room — which is a paradise of warmth — and you will have all clothes of necessity, and your board, which expense is not to be considered as you will have three meals a day, every day of the week (barrin' Sundays when you'll have but two) an' the only thing I asks of you

in return for all these blessings;—for they <u>are</u> blessings as are not to be despised or denied (and if Tinkham above was here, he would neither despise nor deny them)—all I asks is that you does your work."

As she paused for a reply, Little Baggs, who was quite disconcerted at this unexpected turn of ~~affairs~~ the conversation, stood looking down at her dilapidated shoes, and nervously twisting her fingers in and out of the holes in her apron. "Please mam," she finally replied, looking up, "I am very thankful you are so good mam, I really and truly am, but I'm staying with Mrs Supper just now; and as I can go out in the hall where mamma used to go, and sometimes even see in at the door of our old room,—it's—it's—almost as good as havin' a home,—an'—an'—so I'd rather not come, mam," and she put her old tattered apron up to her eyes and cried.

Mrs. McFlicker bit her lips with vexation, but resolved to say nothing further about the matter for a few days and then when Little Baggs' grief had somewhat subsided, she had no doubt but that she could induce her to change her mind. She therefore allowed her to return to the kitchen, where she was soon hard at work, and as for herself.—

well,— she intended to do a little work also, but in quite another direction, and she made the attack upon her wardrobe and rouge-pot, that always preceeded her appearance upon the street.

These necessary preliminaries having been attended to, and due care having been given to the locks upon each window and door, she sallied forth. There was nothing particularly remarkable or ludicrous in regard to her taking an early morning ramble, yet she had hardly turned her back upon the street-door, when old Mrs. Gobber popped her head out of her basement window, and as she wabbled and ~~was so shook with laughter~~ shook with suppressed laughter, said to herself, said she; "Look out, Mariah! Sall Gobber sleeps with her elbows these days!"

Mrs. Mc Flicker, all unconscious of the mirth of her friend, tripped merrily on, and during the course of her walk, came eventually to the store of one,— "Hackett" Mr. Hackett was in, the red-headed "Bo" was also in, and after glancing sharply about her, she went in likewise.

Had there been a letter left at the store, to be called for?

There had.

Would they be so kind as to let her have it?

"They would.—but—
But what?
It was gone.
"To an old woman with one leg?" queried Mrs. McFlicker.

"And a crutch," answered the box, and as the janitress went out into the street and wended her way homeward, she was thinking deeply, and the burthen of her thoughts had reference to a certain woman by the name of —— Gobber.

Chapter 8.

The residents of Crabs Court were poor, miserable, and half-starved, yet notwithstanding all their privations, they could still enter into a discussion or gossip, with as much interest and vim as the wealthiest lords and ladies of the land. This being the case, the new tenants were soon discussed by all the occupants of the court,—except the Spider, who made it a rule never to argue with, or about, anyone in particular, that he might thereby gain time in which to keep on cursing everyone in general. In the course of this confidental exchange of small bits of knowledge, and private opinions, it soon became generally known that the new arrivals were Mr. and Mrs. Arrens that they were as poor and destitute as the wretchedest beggar among them; that Mrs. Arrens was very beautifull, and that she seldom left her room; and that Mr. Arrens was worried and nervous, and was forever haunting the streets in quest of work.

One evening, soon after their arrival, as Mrs. Arrens sat alone in her room and busily at work upon some sewing, she was somewhat startled and surpised to hear a knock at the door, but it was such a light, timid, and self-excusing kind of a rap, that she felt assured and said: "Come in!"

The door was slowly opened and Little Baggs stepped hesitatingly into the room. She seemed as though afraid of having intruded, but upon being received with a pleasant smile and "Good evening," she twisted her fingers as usual into the holes in her apron and said; "Please mam, I hope you won't feel angry with me for comin' in, but if you would please be so very kind as to let me stay for just a few minutes mam, I would be really and truly thankful."

"Why certainly you may stay, my dear," returned Mrs. Arens, as she placed a chair near the stove for her, and resumed her work of sewing; "I don't have many visitors and it's so seldom that I have any one to talk to, that I am getting to be quite like a hermit, and so when you go home dear, I shall hardly blame you if you tell your mother that Mrs. Arens is just too stupid for anything."

Little Baggs shook her head for reply; but kept her lips tightly closed in an endeavor to keep from crying, and though she succeeded in keeping back the sobs, the tears would come, and she sat silently crying and looking around upon the familiar things in her former home.

Mrs. Arens continued talking

and sewing for some moments, and then chancing to look up at her little visitor, found her weeping.

"Why, what's the matter dear?" she said, as she laid her sewing upon the table and drew her chair close up beside her.

"Oh! please, mam, I didn't mean to," answered Little Baggs, "and I won't do it no more, indeed I won't, mam!"

Mrs. Arrens' lovely blue eyes were also filled with tears as she placed her arm lovingly around the neck of her little visitor and tried to comfort her. "Now I know you're too nice a little girl to be crying for nothing, so just cry away, my dear, and then when you have eased your little heart, and are feeling better, you can tell me all about it," and she held the little tear-stained face against her own fair cheek and softly patted the little suds-wrinkled hand.

Little Baggs' heart was filled with love and gratitude at the kind and affectionate manner of this beautiful young woman, who tried to sooth her as tenderly as her own mother, and placing her arms around her neck and burying her face upon her shoulder, she wept afresh.

When she had finally grown calm Mrs. Arrens raised her little red

face from her shoulder, and wiping the tears from her eyes and cheeks, gave her a kiss, and said, with a smile: "Now my dear, I know you feel better and will tell me all about it. Now don't start crying again dear!" she chided, as she saw her eyes filling with tears, and her lips beginning to tremble, "If you start to crying again, I shall have to cry myself, and I know you won't like to have me do that, now will you dear?"

"N-n-no, mam." sighed Little Baggs, as she sat with folded hands and looked earnestly up into the beautiful blu eyes of her fair questioner.

"That's right, my dear," returned Mrs. Arrens as she resumed her sewing; "I was sure you wouldn't. Now I am going to do a little sewing, and while I am working and stitching away you can just tell me all your little troubles and heart aches my dear, and what with listening, and stitching, and talking, I've no doubt but what we shall have a very pleasant time together."

Little Baggs then entered into a history of her troubles, and spent a long and enjoyable evening with her new friend, who, when she bid her "good night" at the door, kissed her lovingly and bade her to be sure and call again.

It thus came about that she was soon a frequent caller upon Mrs. Arrens.

whose spare time seemed to be always occupied with sewing, or (as Little Baggs thought) with pricking her fingers, for certainly no woman was ever more awkward with a needle, than she. — Such sewing too, — the seams appeared to be basted rather than sewed, and were altogether so flimsy and clumsily made that it was a wonder how they held together at all

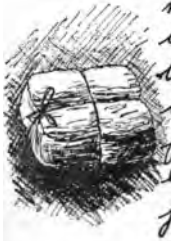
Notwithstanding what others might think of her needlework, Mrs. Arrens at least thought it a success, and took great pride in showing her visitor the little things she was making. They were clothes for a baby — and such clothes as they were, — surely no baby ever had an array of garments made of such various kinds of material. A piece of Mrs. Arrens' red petticoat had been transformed into some tiny shirts, while one of her skirts had been made over into some little dresses, and a long black coat with big buttons and a little hood looked as though the material of which they were made had formerly been a part of a gentleman's coat. As she displayed these results of her handiwork, with a touch of pleasure and pride, she said: "I think they are very good considering what little I had to make them of, and they will do very nicely until better times come, and then of course we

can afford something different. Now, what do you think of them, dear, are they not very nice?"

"Yes mam', answered Little Baggs, who would have died rather than intimate that there was anything wrong about them, 'they are just too lovely for anything, and so warm, mam, — I don't believe if you had ever so much money, that you could get anything that would be any better."

Mrs. Arrens was very glad to receive this encouragement from her little friend, who thereafter never came to see her, without bringing her needle and thread and helping her with the sewing.

Little Baggs thought that next to her mother, Mrs. Arrens was the nicest, kindest, and loveliest woman she had ever known, but felt sorry to think that she was so very poor, and resolved to show her love and gratitude, by buying her some little stockings, shoes, and other things for the baby, so commenced saving up every cent she could spare, and looked joyfully forward to the purchases she intended to make, and thought how surprised and happy her friend would be.



Chapter 9.

Whenever the residents of a particular portion of Rivington Street saw a certain person pay an early morning visit to a near by laundry, they were sure it was rent-day, and when this same individual emerged from his office and walked mechanically up the street, they were sure it was the collector. If there had been the least doubt as to the identification, a single look at the greasy hat and wrinkled shirt-front would have dispelled it.

As a usual thing Mr. Potts paid as little attention to his clothes as he did to the pleas of his poor tenants; but on this particular morning he had gone to the trouble of borrowing a whisk-broom from his neighbor the undertaker, and slapped and dusted ~~them~~ until he appeared a few degrees less shabby than usual. To be brushed or beaten into a presentable appearance, or to be in any wise neat, was such an infrequent and remarkable ~~event~~ experience with him, that he felt as though his clothes were actually new; and as he walked down the Bowery toward Broome Street, he felt so pleased with himself that he smiled and winked at a pretty young nurse girl he passed, and then stopped in front of a mirror in a drug-store window, and made a desperate but futile attempt to

get the ends of his drooping mustache to curl.

When he finally arrived at the tenement in Broome Street he "chanced" to be observed, as usual, from Mrs. McFlicker's front window; and the worthy observer at once welcomed him with much more warmth than "a woman as is the janitress" and a widow might be supposed to possess.

As usual, the rents were collected, the apartments of M. Valère invaded, and the smiling Louis found as polite and reticent as ever, after which Mrs. Potts returned to enjoy a few minutes in the company of Mrs. McFlicker and the cross-eyed cupid.

Mrs. Gobber was promptly on hand to take her usual observations, but after a long and careful squint, her only reward was to discover two or three new dents in the bottom of the dishpan, which put such a damper upon all thoughts of further explorations that she retired to her basement in disgust.

Whether Mrs. Potts enlivened his stay with the fair widow by quoting poetry or singing psalms, I have no means of knowing, but whatever manner of conversation or entertainment they engaged in, must eventually have had some connection with the contents of the ancient desk,

for the rattling of keys, and a sound like the opening of its squeaky lid could be plainly heard.

Now as to whether the opening of that desk was ordinarily a matter of joy or sorrow, I am unprepared to state, but certain it is, that when Mr. Potts took his leave some few minutes later, he appeared very joyful indeed, and as for Mrs. Mc Flicker — well — she was probably joyous also, though there did appear to be just a shade of annoyance in her happiness.

The collector made his next descent upon the dwellers within Crabs Court, by whom he was welcomed with anything but acclamations of joy or reverence. Having interviewed the Spider and received his monthly report as to the amount to be mulcted from such tenants as had damaged or lost anything belonging to the estate of Million and Billion, he was soon making his usual round of the squalid tenements.

His rap at the door of the new tenants apartment was answered by Mr. Arrens, who, when informed that it was the rent that was wanted, stepped out into the hall and closed the door softly behind him. As he stood talking and shivering in the chill air he appeared more gaunt and hungry looking than usual. His hands trembled and his

mouth twitched nervously, as, with many bows and gestures he politely explained how he had been out of employment, and was penniless, and begged that he might be allowed to remain a few days longer, as he was sure to get work very soon and would then pay all he owed.

Mr. Potts listened attentively and then, tapping his receipt-book reflectively, said: "I am very sorry that your circumstances are such that you cannot pay the rent, for 'tis a rule that those who can't pay, must leave, though as far as I'm concerned I should be perfectly willing to have you stay — but — I am only the collector, sir, the agent, a mere piece of mechanism, under orders, and therefore the only thing I can do is to advise you to get your things together as soon as possible, and move, for Mr. Grip, the janitor is likewise under orders, and those orders are — well — they are sometimes unpleasant"

Mr Arrens' eyes rolled restlessly, as he stood listening, and wetting his lips nervously with his tongue as he tried to gulp down a lump that seemed rising in his throat and choking him. At length he found voice, and said: "Ah, surely it would be a great kindness to let us stay a little while longer, and I am certain to get work soon. I don't care

for myself, sir, as I can live or die anywhere, but my — my — wife, is hardly in a condition to be put upon the street, and I am sure that if you will but explain the circumstances to Mr. Grip, he will be kind enough to wait just a few days longer."

Mr. Potts tipped his hat over his left ear, scratched his head thoughtfully with the point of his pencil, and said (as he drew his eyes up into a squint) "I'll have a talk with Mr. Grip and perhaps he may see fit to let you stay, but it is possible — in fact it is quite probable — that he will carry out his orders, and as I have said, his orders are sometimes, and I might say are always — unpleasant."

Mr. Arrens made no reply, but as he stood and bit nervously at his finger-nails he appeared to be thinking — thinking fast, furiously, and disconnectedly, — thinking as only a man thinks when his brain is on the point of being turned by hunger, misery and despair, and the seat of reason is tottering upon the brink of madness. He mumbled, and shivered, and looked restlessly about him, — looked at the broken plaster on the wall opposite, ~~him~~ — looked at the warped and splintered boards beneath his feet, — looked out at the dirty window at the end of the hall — looked — at

everything,—at anything—with such a shifting, wandering glance, and lack of mind and purpose, that he neither saw nor comprehended that which he beheld.

Opening the door as softly as he had closed it, he entered his room, muttering to himself, and running his long, lean fingers nervously through his rumpled hair, as though trying to collect his wandering thoughts, or grasp some remnant of his fleeting mind. He gazed blankly around him, at the empty cupboard in the wall, at some odd little baby clothes hanging upon a chair, and at some unfinished sewing upon the table, and then tip-toed silently over to the bed, where Miss Arens lay sleeping. He stood looking down at her fair face for some moments, and then as his gaze wandered off to the fireless stove, he shivered and mumbled: "'Tis cold,—'tis cold,—cold. I am warm and she is cold," and he took off his coat and placed it

carefully about her shoulders, and then gently brushing back a few locks of wavy hair that straggled idly down upon her forehead, he stooped and kissed her,—kissed her so softly and gently that her fair cheek felt no touch, and she slept on, unconscious of his presence.

He drew his coat more closely about her, and then stepped silently over to the cupboard, into which he peered long

and earnestly. He seemed dazed and unable to comprehend that it was empty, and stood gazing blankly into it and stroking his chin thoughtfully with one hand while with the other he toyed nervously with his rumpled hair. He stood in this bewildered state for some minutes and then seeming to realize that the cupboard was indeed empty and bare, he thrust his hands repeatedly into his several pockets, and at last brought out some pennies, which he counted slowly, over and over again, and muttered: ~~"One and two is three"~~ "One — and — one — is two, and one is three. Three cents, — three cents, — three cents, — ah yes, three cents will buy three rolls, — two for her and one for me is three, — three rolls, — and he stood mumbling it to himself and looking listlessly about the room, until he chanced to spy his hat upon the mantle-shelf, which brought a fresh idea into his troubled brain.

Taking his hat in one hand and keeping tight hold of his money with the other, he slipped silently out of the room, down the creaking hall and swaying stairs and out of the court. The old apple-woman was at her usual post, and as he passed her by without his customary kindly nod of recognition she sought to attract his attention, and

said: "A chilly day sir!" but he looked at her blankly, and as he went out into the crowded street, muttered: "Three,—three—two for her and one for me, is three."

Coatless, with his hair on end, and his hat held tightly 'neath his arm, on,—on,—he went, amid the hurrying throng, jostled, pushed and elbowed, but ever keeping a firm hold upon his money, and muttering: "Three,—three,—two for her and one for me, is three." People stopped to look at him as he ~~made~~ rambled aimlessly along the crowded thoroughfare. Dainty shoppers made way for him to pass, and turning, gazed after him with looks of pity or disgust, according as they thought him drunk or crazy; and the urchins of the street threw snow at him and yelled. Sometimes he stopped and peered into the nearby window of some store, and thrusting his fingers nervously through the tangled masses of his hair, seemed as though trying to recollect that which he sought.

He chanced to stop thus at a baker's shop, and as he licked his lips hungrily and gazed upon the food within, it occurred to him that here was what he wanted, and going in he looked longingly about upon the shelves and cases filled with bread and pastry, and then opening his clenched and

trembling hand, rolled out his money on the counter and bid the clerk to give him rolls. He watched her closely as she counted them, and taking up the bag, went out into the street and wandered on,—and on,—and on,—and even as he went he hugged his hat and bag of rolls beneath his arm, and muttered, "Three,—three,—two for her and one for me, is three."

Chapter 10.

Mr. Potts (after his talk with Mr. Arens) continued his rapping and receipting, until he had gone the round of all his tenants, and then made his way to the dismal abode of the Spider.

"Ah! it's a little damp here today, Grip," said he as he entered the dark and musty cellar, and looked down at the dirty lines of drip that trickled in at the door, and around at the damp walls that sweated little drops of filthy moisture from the surface of each dirt and time-stained stone, and up at the dark, decaying boards overhead, from which long lines of dust and mould depended.

"Damp, sir!" snarled the Spider, as he cut and ripped at an old arm-chair he was fixing. "Yes, damp as a well, or a ~~tomb~~ sewer, or a tomb! Ha, ha!" he chuckled, as he leered up at Mr. Potts and gave his knife a vicious plunge into the upholstery of the chair, "Damp as a tomb; that's it exactly. Musty, and mouldy, and slimy, and dedd. Ha, ha! It smells dead here, now, don't it? A regular tomb of old furniture, broken, smashed, dead, dying and rotting sir, and most of the people as has owned it are also dead, dying and rotting, and gone to the devil. Ha, ha!—sir, gone to the devil, and more to follow." and he chuckled and grinned savagely, and flourishing his wicked looking

knife, made such a violent attack upon the chair, that the air was soon filled with a stifling cloud of dirt and dust.

Mr. Potts, sneezed, coughed and retreated to the door, where he stood brushing his clothes and peering back into the gloom and dust within. "That's a terrible dirty job you have there, Grip," he gasped, as he spit out a mouthful of dust and grime he had inhaled, "in fact, a little too dirty to suit me, so just wait till I've done speaking to you, and then if you want to smother yourself to death, why, go ahead."

The Spider thereupon stopped his exertions, and emerging from the whirl of dust, shuffled out onto the stone steps where he sat down amid the dirt and wet, and leered up at Mr. Potts, who said,

"I haven't much to say this month Grip, as the tenants have paid up fairly well, though the last ones, — that is, the ones in the Baggi tenement, — have failed to do as expected and required, and of course as you have charge of the renting of the rooms, it remains with you to see that they are let to the best advantage. Now if you do find it necessary to put them out at once, it is to be borne in mind that it is without any such orders from me, for my sympathy and nature is too mechanicab to admit of it."

The Spider winked his eye. nodded

his head knowingly, and sidled back into his cellar, while Mr. Potts, having finished his morning's work, went out to the nearest saloon and refreshed himself with several glasses of "the natural and psincipal necessity of life," and when he passed by the entrance of Crabs Court, some few minutes later, he observed the janitor tacking up a notice, and grinning and cursing at every thump of his rusty wrench.

Having, by means of his dirty card, informed the world that he had a furnished room to let, the Spider's next act was to go and take posession of said room, and with this intention in view he was soon shuffling up the narrow stairs and through the cheerless halls of the tenement. The door was closed but he opened it without ceremony, and sidling into the room, looked warily round, and noticing that Mrs. Arrens was the only occupant, he waved his ugly knife viciously, and shuffling over to the bed, leered down at her and chuckled and laughed in a silent and horrible manner.

Mrs. Arrens slumber was evidently disturbed by his presence, for she awoke with a start, and upon looking up, beheld him bending over her and indulging in his noiseless and disgusting fit of evil mirth. She shrank away from him as from some dangerous and loathsome animal, and having got up from the bed

and out of his reach, stood eyeing him with a look of mingled fear and horror.

The Spider chuckled with glee at the fright he had caused her, and cocking his frowsy head to one side, looked her over intently and said: "Ah! my pretty dear, it does seem a pity to have to turn you out. A devilish pity, my lovely one, and quite unnecessary, for there *is* ways of payin' the rent that's as good as cash. Ha, ha, ha! my beauty!" he chuckled and grinned, "They *is* ways, and devilish good ways they be, as many a woman as with half your good looks, has found out before now."

Mrs. Arrens made him no answer, but keeping as far away from his filthy person as possible, hurriedly gathered up what few belongings she had, and left the room.

The Spider laughed with his usual dry and hollow cackle, and slammed the door so hard that the pieces of a broken pane of glass in the window were shaken from the rotting frame and fell smashing and clattering down to the pavement. Shuffling after her he continued his gibing and chuckling until she ~~had~~ left the tenement and went out to where the old apple-woman was having a lively argument with the one-legged pensioner, who, being a trifle more drunken than usual had sat down in her basket of apples, and being under the impression that he was ship

wrecked, sang:

"I'm stran—ded on
A for—ën shore."

Mrs. Arrens stood just within the entrance of the court, and with bundle in hand, looked anxiously up and down the crowded street, and wearily watched and waited. The tide of humanity swept past her with a steady flow, and her waiting lengthened from minutes into hours, and the hours wore slowly on till twilight tokened the coming night, and the light of gas and lamp began to flare and twinkle in the neighboring stores and tenements. Her beautiful face seemed more worn and wan than usual, as, hungry and chilled with her long vigil, she stood waiting in the shadow and damp of the squalid court and eagerly scanning each passer-by.

The bell in the spire of the church nearby, tolled out the hour of six, and the stores, and shops, and dismal dens of sweat and work, poured forth their quota to the human tide, that surged noisily along the pavement. Out of this hurrying, jostling, tide of life, and into the gloom of Crabs court, came Little Baggs, who, being in her usual state of hurry and rush, came very near knocking her friend down.

"Oh! you can't be goin' to leave, are you Mrs. Arrens?" she exclaimed, as she beheld the contents of the bundle, which she had knocked all awry by her hasty entrance.

"Yes, dear, we have got to move," answered Mrs. Arrens, who continued by telling her how she had been put out of the house by Mr. Grip, and was awaiting the return of Mr. Arrens (or Jean, as she called him) who she believed had gone out in quest of work.

Little Baggs listened earnestly to what was said, and then as she looked up into the beautiful, but worn and weary face of her patient friend, her eyes filled with tears, and she said; "An,—an,—suppose, Mrs. Arrens, that he comes back without havin' found any work. What would you do then?"

"I hardly know dear," she replied, "but I'm sure we will manage to get along some how until better times come, and they will surely come sometime dear."

"Y—e—s—mam," answered Little Baggs, hesitatingly. "I'm sure they'll come sometime,—but,—but, sometime is,—is,— no time at all, most times, mam, and you have got to live while it's comin', too. Now, you've been awful good to me, mam, and I've been a wantin' to show you how thankful I am, an' I've been a savin' up some money, that I'd [redacted] spent foolishly if I hadn't, and I was goin' to buy you some baby shoes an' things with it, but as it is, mam, I think it would be best to give it to the Spider, an' then you won't have to leave, perhaps,

at all, mam."

Tears were falling from Mrs. Arsens' eyes when she tried to reply, but her little friend would not listen to any objection, and taking the bundle from her, led the way into the court.

"Now, just wait here for a few minutes, mam, while I run down and see the Spider, an' have him bring up some wood an' kindlin's." said Little Baggs, as she made her way down the slippery and filthy steps of his den.

It was as dark as a pocket, and the steps were steep and covered with ice, but she knew the place well, and running quickly down, almost went heels-over-head as she tripped over something at the foot of the stairs.

"Plague take such a place!" she exclaimed, as she made a grab at the wall for support, "There's always some old box, or chair, or somthin-or-ruther, lyin' on his old stairs, for people to break their necks on! — It's old rags or carpets this time, I guess," she continued, as she put her hand down to disentangle her feet. "This place is a regular old trap, — that's what it is, an' I'll bet he does it a purpose!"

She rapped loudly on the cellar door, and receiving no response, gave it a couple of kicks and called out. "Hi! there, Spider! you're wanted!" There was no reply

to her summons; but the door, being unlatched, swung slowly open on its rusty, ~~hinges~~ creaking hinges, and some rats within, being scared by the sound, ran, scampering and squeaking away, to their nests in the maze of old furniture, while a draught of damp and musty air eddied out and enveloped her in its chill and sickly embrace.

It was a horrible place at best, and with a setting of pitchy blackness and scampering rats, it was simply unendurable, and Little Baggs shivered and ran quickly up the steps.

"The Spider is out, mam," she panted, as she ran over to where Mrs. Arens was awaiting her, "but it don't make no difference as I have got a key of my own as fits the door an' I can borrow some coal an' kindlins' of Mrs. Supper an' then when I see the Spider in the mornin', I will have everything fixed all right."

Mrs. Arens could not find words to thank her little friend sufficiently for her kindness, and wept tears of gratitude as she followed, faint and weary, up the shaking stairs, and along the hall to the room she had so lately left.

Little Baggs hustled around as merry as ever, and what with hunting high and low for some old rags to stuff into the broken pane of glass in the window, and borrowing wood and coal from Mrs.

supper, and buying some bread at Mrs. Simpson's, and groceries at Hackett's, and a little meat of the butcher, — she was as busy as possible, and ran in and out of the room so often, that the draught from the swaying door kept the little ballet dancer in a continual flutter and jump, and finally caused her to kick so high that she flopped clear over for very shame, and hid her face against the wall, until observed and righted by her little mistress.

It was the first time for many a day that Mrs. Arrens had had a good meal, and in her half-starved and weakened condition, she thought it the best supper she had ever partaken of, though her enjoyment of it was marred by the absence of her dear, who was ever uppermost in her thoughts, and whom she pictured to herself as wandering about coatless and chilled in his tireless quest for work.

Little Baggs tried to be as cheerful as possible, and after they were through supper, she put the tea on the stove and kept everything in readiness so that when Mr. Arrens should return, he would find a good warm supper awaiting him.

As the hours passed by they sat together and ~~planned~~ talked, and planned, and built ~~many~~ the usual mystic castles as to what they should do when the "better times" came, — and so the night wore on, until Little Baggs, tired by her

day's washing and, evening's running about, gradually lost interest in what was being said, and was soon fast asleep on the arm of her friend, who kissed her affectionately, and then managed to lay her upon the bed without awakening her.

The bell in the church spire near-by soon tolled ~~out~~ the hour of two, and as the sound came faintly echoing in through the court, Mrs. Sivens was startled at the passing of the night, and throwing the coat about her head and shoulders, went out and waited at the entrance of the court, — waited till she was chilled and shaking with the damp of night, — waited until the bell in the lofty spire, had tolled, and tolled, and tolled again, and the twinkling up of lights, and signs of awakening life and bustle in the silent street, gave token of returning dawn.

Chapter 11

When the tenants who lived on the floor above the Spider arose in the morning, they remarked that he was "very quiet last night," and when Mrs. Supper chanced to look out of the window and saw that the row of large iron ash cans had not been rolled out to the street as early as usual, she thought to herself, "the Spider is late this morning," while the squeaking rats in the dismal cellar probably remarked or thought nothing [redacted] whatever about him. as they scampered back and forth amid the musty furniture, and scurried in and out of the open door, and over the bundle of rags at the foot of the stairs, —— and what a peculiar looking bundle it was to be sure. All twisted about, and heaped up, and jammed into a corner, —— and what an odd little stream oozed out from beneath it, and flowed over the stones, and crept in at the door, and trickled over the floor, and into the dust, and dirt, and deeper gloom beyond, —— and what a peculiar red stain it left, wherever it flowed or crept, or trickled, —— the dust and dirt was colored with it, and the rats left little red foot-prints all about, where they had stepped in it, and their noses were stained from lapping at it. The damp and chilly draught from the cellar, came out and fluttered with the rags, and the light

of morning above came gradually down and battled with the gloom below, till objects that looked indistinct and hazy began to loose their spectral shape and stood revealed in light of day.

Little Baggs came early to the Spider's den, and running lightly down the icy steps, came upon the wind-tossed pile of rags, — the rags she had tripped upon a few hours before: — rags that even in their tumbled state, looked strongely familiar, — looked like the Spider's tattered coat and frayed and dirty pants, — looked so very much like them indeed that she stopped not to note the little stream of red that oozed out from beneath them, or to heed the long, lean arm and dirty hand, that lay outstretched and clutching at the slimy stones, but rushed up stairs and raised a cry, that at once brought all the tenants of the court about her.

"The Spider is dead!!" soon echoed through the tenements, — and was repeated in the street, — and babbled in the neighboring courts, — and gossiped everywhere within a block's length of his den, and soon such a concourse of people had arrived, that the court was filled even to the entrance. They laughed and jostled, joked and swore, and those who knew him best when living, cursed loudest, now that he was

dead. He was jeered at and despised by all save the little old apple-woman, who, having climbed upon a packing case to escape the crowd, stood shaking her head, and muttering, "Well! Well! He was a queer one, that's what he was!"

The coroner, a doctor, and an undertaker, having arrived, were duly escorted through the throng by a couple of policemen, who used such excellent judgment in forcing their way into the crowded court, that the only persons whom they found it necessary to throttle or club, were those who were too weak or small to resist.

In the course of the investigation and discussion that followed the arrival of these learned and legal gentlemen, the doctor gave it out as his opinion that the Spider was dead, and the coroner, upon finding that a knife had been driven through his heart, acknowledged the undoubted correctness of said opinion, and gave the doctor great credit for his perspicacity, while the undertaker, who was of a practical turn of mind, took out his pencil and rule and made measurments for a coffin.

After much further investigation and argument, it was unanimously agreed that the Spider had slipped on the icy stairs, and in falling had pierced his heart with the knife. This verdict upon being made known to the crowd above,

was promptly resented by a little old man, perched up on an ash-can, who shook his fist at the corpse and offered to bet his shirt against a wire spike, that the Spider never had no heart."

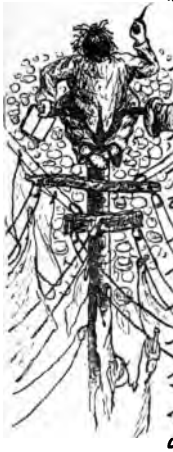
This sally was greeted by yells of approval from the crowd, who were still further elated by one of their number giving the ash-can orator a sly shove, that sent him sprawling and sputtering into a near by puddle of mud and slush, from which he floundered out, and dancing around, called upon the crowd to bear witness, that he offered to "lick" any one within the sound of his voice. This raised more merriment, which was still further enhanced by a mishap of the drunken pensioner, who, while sitting upon the railing of an iron fire-escape, and singing:

"Good-bye my love, I'm going off
To climes beyond the sea."

lost his balance, and "went off" the fire-escape, and fell head-first into a tub of swill.

A fat little man, with a red handkerchief tied about his ears, sat astride of a clothes-post in the centre of the court, and made copious notes in a little book, to which he occasionally gave such a violent flourish, that he was in eminent danger of toppling off into the crowd, and when someone announced

that the Spider was killed by an accident, he nodded pleasantly and as he scribbled away, murmured, "Killed by an ax! Ah yes, just so! Very good item, — very sensational item, in — d — e — e — d!"



"Ah! Good morning, gentlemen!" he cried out, as the learned and professional trio came up from the cellar, after their examination of the Spider, "I am here as a representative of the press, as a culler of news, and a searcher of facts for the columns of the Daily What, whose circulation at the present date is precisely two hundred and seventy-seven thousand, seven hundred and six copies per day, — and increasing," and he tapped the note-book by way of emphasis, and continued, "Now, gentlemen, if you will kindly give me any interesting facts, I shall be pleased to record them."

He was at once put in possession of such "facts" as they were aware of, which he immediately misconstrued and recorded, (as the truth) with many wild flourishes of his pencil, and exclamations of, "Very good item sir! Very excellent item in — d — e — e — d!"

When the excitement attending the death of the Spider had somewhat subsided, and the crowd in the court began to disperse, Little Baggs hurried off to her work, and when she arrived at the tenement in Broome Street, she found Mrs. Flicker in a terrible rage at her tardi

ness.

"Please, mam, I.—I.—I couldn't help it," she stammered, as she hurriedly threw off her wraps, and rolled up her sleeves, "I started as early as ever I could, but there was such a crowd there, mam, an' doctors, an' police, an' ever so many others, an' they all wanted me to tell what I knew about the Spider, and"—

"About the what?" yelled Mrs. McFlicker, as she started up with a surprised and vicious look.

"About the Spider, mam,—that is,—I mean Mr. Grip, the janitor,—he's dead, mam," answered Little Baggs, who wondered at the interest and surprise exhibited by her mistress.

Mrs. McFlicker looked uglier still at this announcement, and grabbing her drudge by the shoulder, gave her a twitch and said: "Now don't stand there a gappin' at me, but tell me what's been a happenin' of him! Spit it out!"

Little Baggs thereupon told her all she knew about it, and Mrs. McFlicker got so excited, that she put on her hat and cloak, and rushed off up the street, regardless of a lack of paint and powder.

Whether any one in Crabs Court was ever aware that the late Mr. Grip had a sister, is immaterial, but certain it is that ~~Mrs.~~ Mrs. McFlicker bore that relation to him, and when she swept down

on a number of tenants, who had taken it upon themselves to do a little rummaging for hidden wealth amid the litter of his cellar, she convinced them all, that whether or not she might be able to prove a blood-relationship between herself and the Spider,— or even the Devil,— mattered little, as her disposition and temper was such, that they would have taken it for granted, that she would have been a worthy relation of either.

Now, although she had never been known to visit her brother's abode while he lived, she made ample amends for it now that he was dead, and shutting herself up in his musty cellar, became so attached to the place, that she could not find time to attend his funeral, and had no idea as to whether his body was burned, buried, or consigned to the deep sea.

There was such a rummaging of old ~~bu~~bureaus, poking into beds, ripping of upholstery, digging into cracks, and peering into holes, that even the rats took alarm, and seeking safety in flight, left her to work out her further salvation or destruction, at whatever pace she saw fit.

Chapter 12.

It had been a busy yet quiet day with Little Baggs, who, without the irritating presence of Mrs. Mc Flicker to annoy her, had washed merrily on til everything in sight was in its usual state of steam, and suds, and slop. Six oclock at last and every thing put to rights, she was off for Crabs Court, where she arrived in her customary state of hurry and lack of breath. As she came to the door of her friend's room, she heard the murmur of voices within, and hesitated about intruding, but recognising the voice of Mrs. Supper and the wail of her twins, she gave a timid knock, which was at once answered by Mrs. Boozler (the midwife) who, having a great dread of all rivals in her profession, opened the door just a trifle to see who was without, and being satisfied with her observation, allowed her to enter.

The dingy little lamp on the table cast forth a sickly, yellow glimmer, which seemed dimmer than usual, on account of the eddying rings and puffs of smoke that circled upwards from Mrs. Boozler's pipe, and filled the room with a bluish haze.

Mrs. Supper, — who sat by the stove rocking the twins on her knee, and seemingly entirely oblivious to the fact that they were anything but satisfied with the operation, and were howling in

protest thereof, — nodded pleasantly to Little Baggs as she entered, while Mrs. Boozler — ignoring her entirely after letting her in — tilted her chair back against the door, as a barrier against any inquisitive accoucheuse or midwife who might seek to intrude, and resuming her pipe said (between the puffs) "As I was remarkin', Mrs. Supper, — I may have my ideas, and other peoples may have theirs, and just as long as they don't interflict with mine, I makes no objections, but when any one interfringes with my operations of a professional case, I objects to my full ability."

Little Baggs paid no ~~further~~ attention to the further remarks of Mrs. Boozler, but running over to the bed knelt down beside it, and having kissed her friend tenderly, brushed back the wavy locks of hair that hid her damp and pallid brow.

Mrs. Arrens thanked her by a look from her lovely eyes, which seemed brighter and more beautiful than ever, and moving the covering slightly, disclosed to view an atom of a baby, whose tiny, wrinkled, little face was pressed close against her breast. It was such a poor little, weazened faced, delicate mite of a ~~little~~ thing, that Little Baggs could hardly believe it was alive, until she saw it pucker up its little mouth and cry.

Mrs. Arens was very weak and seemed to have hardly strength enough to [redacted] breathe, but she was evidently anxious to speak to her little friend, who taking hold of her fair hand, bent low and listened to her faintly spoken words.

"Dear child," she whispered, as she tried to clasp the little suds-wrinkled hand tighter in her own weak palm, "I have been very sick, and when I felt that I might not be here to speak to you when you returned, I wrote a letter that is now beneath my pillow; and if I should chance to pass away, please take it with my baby to the address I have written, and your love and kindness to me, dear, will never be regretted, and your future life will be as full of joy as your present is of toil and misery. If I should get well the letter will be useless and we will destroy it and wait for better times. I am feeling weak,—very weak, dear,—and wandering in the mind, and wish,—Oh! wish,—so very much, dear, to see my Jean again, and if you would but do me one more favor dear, and take his coat and go out to the entrance of the court,—or perhaps just a little,—a very little,—further, dear,—you may find him and bring him back to me."

Little Baggs wept silently, and kissing her friend, promised that she would do everything she asked, and would go out at once and hunt every where she

could think of. Mrs. Arrens looked the gratitude she could not utter, and her little friend, after giving her another kiss, and taking a look at the baby, threw Jean's coat over her arm and ran out.

Fine, feathery flakes of snow were sifting steadily down as she started out upon her search, and the dirt and refuse of the court and street was being slowly covered with a mask of white. Down one street and up another she hurried, peering into dark and dismal courts, where silence reigned, and anon glancing timidly into some hall or dive, where brilliant lights shone forth on scenes of drunken revelry. The snow fell faster as the night advanced, and as it swirled and eddied, piled up little hills and rolls of white on sills and railings and drifted high at entrances to alley-ways and courts. She noted not that the hour was getting late, or that the driving snow had covered her old coat with a mantle of white, but hurried on through the storm and drifts, with her old shawl flapping its wet ends in her face, and her eyes blinking at the wind and snow, and ever noting each passer-by.

At last, tired, wet, and [redacted] hungry, she was too exhausted to search further, and going into the shadow of a nearby door-way, sat down to rest on the snow-covered steps and wept with sorrow

and disappointment. Her clothes were so white with the storm that she might very well have been taken for an odd little patch of snow that had drifted in at the door-way and piled itself up into the semblance of a little snow-woman. That tears should flow down the cheeks of a woman of snow was nowise improbable, but that such a person could sob, was something not to be thought of; and thus it happened that when a little old man, —wearing a shabby snow-covered overcoat, and with a beard as white as the snow that blew about it,— came peering into the dark courts and hallways of the street, he was at once sure that the little figure crouched up in the ~~do~~ shadow, was other than snow.

"Well! Well! dear!" he said in a kind and cheery manner, as he stepped into the shadow of the door-way, and sitting down beside her, began to brush the snow from off her shoulders. "If you hadn't been crying I should have taken you for a drift, or a big icicle, or a snow-sprite, my dear. Why what a state you are in, child, — snow, — snow, — snow, from your head to your heels, and you're going to laugh about it too; yes, I am sure you will, if you will just step out into the light and see what a funny little snow-woman you are," and brushing off the snow as well as he could, he helped

her to rise, and went out with her into the light of a nearby store.

"Why it's the Queen of the Tub!" he exclaimed with surprise, as he looked at her little red face "Dear me!" he continued, as he carefully brushed off the snow and shook the wet from her shawl, "I ought to have known it at once, but you'll forgive me this time, I'm sure: now won't you my dear?"

Little Baggs hardly knew how to reply, but nodded assent, and the old gentleman, — who was none other than M. Valere, — continued: Well, then we'll be friends, that is, if your mother don't object to your having a wicked old Santa Claus like me for a friend," and he looked at his snowy coat and beard, and fell into his usual state of pensive sadness, and for some moments seemed looking far away and lost in thought.

"Please, sir," answered Little Baggs, my mother is dead, and I ain't got no friends but one, sir, an' she's a'most gone, — an' — an' — an' she's just the bestest, loveliest friend I'll ever have, an' I must run right back now; for I know she's a waitin' and a hopin' sir."

"Ah! Poor child!" exclaimed M. Valere What a life! What misery! — and I forgetting all about you, almost as soon as we got acquainted, and what a lot of errands you might have run for me since then, — but

dear me, I forget every-thing now-a-days, sometimes I almost forget my name, and sometimes I almost wish I could forget it, — but no matter, dear, I'll not forget you again, and if you will just tell me all your little troubles as we walk along, I haven't a doubt but that we shall find a way out of them."

As they hurried off amid the whirling snow, Little Baggs told him all about her kind friend, and how her husband had kindly covered her with his coat, and going out in search of work, was either "lost or frozen," as he had not returned and she had been "huntin' and huntin' for him, everywheres".

M. Valère was so interested in what she told him about her friend and her husband, that he plied her with question upon question regarding them; and often as they passed some brilliantly lighted store or corner of the street, where a flaring gaslight cast its radiant, wavering, circle ~~of light~~ on the drifting snow, he slackened pace and seemed to think and hesitate, then hurried on and questioned her again.

"Well! Well! my dear!" he exclaimed as he chanced to ~~see~~ notice the coat she carried on her arm, "just to think of a big man like me letting you ~~trudge~~ through this terrible storm with that heavy coat hanging on your arm! Why, I'm actually

ashamed of myself!"

"It ain't very heavy, sir," answered Little Baggs, as she handed it over to him.

"Oh, dear no, so it isn't!" he returned as he took it from her, "It's very light,— yes shamefully light to wear in such wild weather as this," and he held it up in the light from a nearby window and examined it closely. "Pockets empty and torn, and two buttons gone, but a very good coat at one time, dear,—very good material, —and let me see the tag,— ah, yes, made by "Harrow"— "J. Harrow, Cripplegate,"— that's London, dear, was the poor fellow from London?"

"I don't know, sir," answered Little Baggs, who wondered at his taking so much interest in the old coat, and at his ability to find out so much concerning it.

"Well! Well! my dear, we'll just fold it up carefully and hurry right along. Now it isn't much further is it, dear?," and without waiting for her to reply, continued, "I know it can't be much further. I'm positive of it, but perhaps we'd better take a cab, my dear. What do you say, shall we have a cab dear, or shall we hurry a little faster?"

"It's only around the corner, sir, an' we'll be there in just a minute," answered Little Baggs, as she ran along by his side."

"Ah, yes! just around the corner," he repeated after her, as he slackened his swift pace, and walked slowly and hesitatingly forward. "Dear me!" he continued, as he took out his pocket-handkerchief and repeatedly mopped his forehead and eyes with it, "I think we are hurrying too fast, dear, much too fast in such a storm,— and its getting colder too, dear, is it not? Yes it must be getting colder. I'm sure of it. Quite positive of it," and as he hesitated and then stopped beneath the flaring gas-lamp at the corner, he shook as though he had a chill.

Little Baggs looked at his pale face and trembling body, and placing her little hand lovingly upon his arm, asked him if he was sick.

"No, dear," he replied as he again mopped his fore-head with his handkerchief, "not sick, but cold,— just a trifle cold, dear,— and the court, Crabs Court —— is it much farther, dear, and can you see it from here?"

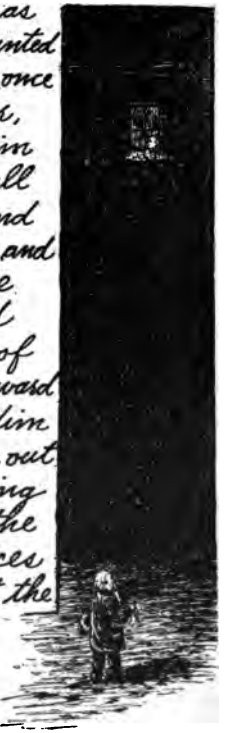
Little Baggs pointed it out to him, and as he gazed intently at the deep line of shadow, he mopped his face again and mumbled, "Crabs Court,— Crabs Court,— Ah! yes, she lives in Crabs Court, and she is good, and kind, and patient, and handsome. Ah! yes, to be sure she is,— and would you know

her picture if you saw it, my dear?" he said, turning to Little Baggs who stood regarding him with looks of mingled pity and surprise "Yes! Yes! I know you would, I am positive [redacted] of it," and without waiting for her to reply he opened his coat, and taking out a little golden locket, displayed to her astonished gaze a tiny but perfect miniature of her beautiful friend.

"I knew it! I knew it!" he exclaimed, as he noted the look of recognition and surprise that over spread her face. "Come on, dear! We will go! We will go!" and as he replaced the locket in his breast, he rushed off into the dark court, but hesitated even as he entered, and leaning against the cold, damp wall of the passageway, looked shudderingly in at the gaunt and cheerless tenements that reared their dank, decaying walls from out the dark and dismal shadows of the court.

"Ah! What a court! What a court! So dark, — and drear, — and cold, — Ah! yes, 'tis very cold dear," and he shuddered as before, and mopped his brow; "— and so many staring windows, — ah! yes, — cheerless, frosty windows, and her room, dear, — can you tell me which it is?" and as she pointed out to him the little misty ray of light that shone dimly out through the [redacted]

broken and frosted panes of the window far above, he looked at it in silence for some moments, and then said: "I'll go no farther, dear, — not yet, — not yet, until you run and tell her that an old man waits without, — a weary, worn, and grey-haired man, who loves her as of old, and who's waited long, and hunted half the earth, that he might see her once again, yet now that he has found her, will stay without, unless she bids him enter. Run, child! Run and tell her all I've said, and say I send my love and blessing to the little one beside her," and as Little Baggs sped off, and up the trembling stairs, he stood lone and shaking, mid the dusky shadows of the court, and gazing earnestly upward through the swirling snow at the dim light in the window, while stealing out from the near-by church and echoing in through the silent court, came the sound of the sweet and tuneful voices of the choir-boys, as they chanted at the midnight mass.



Chapter 13.

The driving snow whirled and eddied about, and drifted high, so very high in fact, that Mr. Potts upon returning late home, from his evening's stock-playing in a near-by bucket-shop, was compelled to wade through drifts that reached his middle. His office, too, was piled with several little heaps that had blown in beneath the door and around the window frames, but he heeded them not, as he paced mechanically back and forth before the smoky lamp that stood upon the fireless stove and flared and flickered in the draughts of chill night air that entered through the many cracks and crevices of the floor and walls.

His investment in the "dead sure tip," was evidently worrying him, for, as he kept up his steady tread across the room, he dug his pencil into his hair and cursed his luck, his broker, and his fair betrothed. Yes, he even cursed his dear beloved, and called her names that were anything but complimentary or endearing, and laughed to think how he had fooled her.

Having walked and cursed himself into a good humor, he stepped behind the curtain, and yanking out the old dilapidated trunk, slammed it down before the stove, and after remov-

ing from it all his worldly possessions — which consisted principally of a few wrinkled shirts and some heelless socks, — jumped and stamped upon it, until he had reduced it into kindlings, with which he proceeded to fill the stove, and in a short while had a hot fire that heated up the room and turned the ~~fast~~ little drifts of snow into miniature lakes, in which soaked and floated the odds and ends of matches, cigarettes, and such like refuse, that littered up the floor.

Wrapping up his possessions, he threw the bundle onto his disordered bed, and then turning and addressing the stove, — which was getting red hot, — said, "That's right! heat her up old boy! Heat her up 'til youre red, white, or melted, for all I care. It's the last fire I'll ever make in you, so we'll have it a hot one, and a drink or two to go with it," and he jammed in some more pieces of the old trunk, and then went out for a pail of beer.

The snow came swirling down as fast as ever, and the light of a flaring gas-lamp by the curb sent strange shadows dancing along behind him. Shadows that as they wavered back and forth with every flicker of the gas appeared uncanny with their silent dance and flitter, and like a host of writhing demons, advancing and receding, and ever

reaching after him, from out the shade of the buildings. As he went in at the door of his neighbor on the right, he glanced over his shoulder at the ghostly, dancing shadows, and thought he saw a human form that crouched and followed along behind him, but believing it to be but a vagrant fancy or wreathing of the snow, paid no attention to it.

Purchasing a pailful of the "principal and natural necessity of life," he returned toward his office, which he had almost reached, when from out the dancing shadows at his side, sprang a coatless, hatless, man, in whose ghastly face and wild and restless eyes, shone hunger, suffering and madness.

"Where is she?" he chattered and hissed, as he shot out his long, emaciated arm and grasped the affrighted Mr. Potts roughly by the collar. "Where is she?" he repeated, shoving his scowling face close up to him and staring wildly with his blood-shot eyes. "Where's Arline? Where is she? Tell me, tell me quick for I must go" and his wild and threatening demeanor changed to one of supplication

It was some moments before Mr. Potts recovered sufficient composure of mind to enable him to recognise his questioner, or make reply, but the curious name of Arline brought to mind the mysterious artist and his portrait, and thinking that

he might have stumbled upon something in connection therewith, that could be turned to his advantage, he answered by asking: "Who *is* Arline?"

"Who *is* Arline?" repeated the crouching and shivering creature, in a dazed manner. "*Who* is *she*?" he cried, as his mood changed to one of fierceness, "*She's mine*! *Not his, but mine*! and she is waiting and I must go," and he was about to reel away, into the night and storm, when Mr Potts detained him, and after much persuasion, managed to get him into his office, where he proceeded to continue his investigations.

The wretched man was plastered with the driven snow, and as he crouched and chattered by the hot stove, the water ran and dripped from every portion of his clothes and body. As Mr Potts' wish was to get as much information as possible from him, he thought that the best thing to do was to brace him up a little, and as he had a pailful of his sovereign tonic close at hand, he had no doubt about being able to succeed in his endeavor; but upon finding it was impossible to induce him to take even so much as a swallow of it, was much disgusted and disappointed, and at once considered that the poor man must indeed be in a serious,—if not hopeless,—condition of mind, and to prove the superiority of his own mental condition, threw back his head and drained the

pail.

"Ah! my chattering friend," he said, as he smacked his lips and gave his drooping mustache a wipe with his coat-sleeve, "if you had just taken a pull at *that*, it would have taken the kinks and shivers out of you in no time. Made a regular fightin'-cock out of you, and set your ~~too~~ blood a-workin' and your tongue a-waggin', like, — well, — like Mariah's for instance," and he laughed to think what a good joke he had made.

"Now let me see," he continued as he drew ~~him~~ a stool up to the ~~fire~~ stove, and sitting down, took his rent-book from his pocket and ran his eyes quickly over its pages. "I guess I've forgotten what your name is, though it's Aladin, or Alonzo, or Almighty, or something or other that begins with an A, if I am not mistaken. Oh! yes, here it is, — Arrens, — Mr. J. Arrens, — Your name is Arrens isn't it?"

"My name, — my name," repeated the poor fellow reflectively, and then as he seemed to understand the meaning of the words he mumbled, his face was distorted with maniac rage, and with flashing eyes he cried, "*My name*! *What for*? Aha! I see, so you're after me too!" and with a wild spring he landed his skinny hands upon the throat of Mr. Potts and bore him to the floor, and as he tried to strangle

him, shrieked out, "My name? Never! N-e-ver! My name is mine, — mine, and Arline is mine, not his but mine, and she is waiting, she is lost and I must go;" and his violent mood having subsided, he left the struggling and half-strangled Potts, and picking up a remnant of paper and masked and water-soaked rolls which he had dropped, staggered aimlessly about the room, muttering: "She's mine, — she's mine, — forever mine, not his but mine."

Mr. Potts struggled to his feet, and tearing a leg from the old desk, — which had been knocked down and overturned in the scrimmage, — was on the point of depriving his demented visitor of brains of any sort whatever, but upon seeing the harmless and helpless state he was then in, concluded to defer the operation until such time as he should fly into another tantrum. Standing with one foot resting on the old desk, and with his club in position for instant use, he eyed his demented visitor, — who with the remnant of his precious rolls clasped tightly beneath his dripping arm, stood cowering in a corner, — and said: "Now, don't you go to excitin' your self and tryin' to come any of your delirriums on me, because they won't go. — See? I'm a mild, mechanical sort of man at most times, but if you go to tryin' on any more such addle-brain

leap-frog games with me, I'll land you such a dod-gasted mechanical crack on your ko-ko that you'll be the deadest man in the morgue — See?" and he waved his club threateningly about with one hand, used the other to remove a few remains of his collar, which curled rakishly up over his ear.

"Now, look here," he continued, as he took a firm grasp on his ~~club~~ weapon, "I'm going to ask you a few questions, and if you can or want to answer them, why fire away, but if they ain't to your liking, just keep your temper and be calm, — very calm, — mind now, 'calm's' the word from this on, 'cause I warn you that if you attempt any more such kangaroo acts, you'll be basted galley west — See? Now, who is Arline? Who is she, that's the question? Now take time, take time, and don't exert yourself," he admonished, as he saw his visitor show symptoms of excitement at mention of the name, "there's a month of Sundays somewheres ahead, an' you'll reach them all if you'll just take time. Now, easy, — easy there, — and tell me who she is."

"She is mine! She is mine! Always, always, mine, not his, but mine!" cried his cowering visitor, as he ran his bony fingers through his wet and wildly rumpled hair.

"Ah! yes, to be sure she is yours," returned Mr. Potts, "I'm not denying it! Not!!

No not for a minute!— I'd see you in Bedlam first! Now let's see,— you say, "she is not his,"— well, who is the "his"? That is, who is the he,— see what I mean?"

"He is not hers, she is not his, she is mine,— mine!!" and he raised his voice on the last word until it sounded as a shriek.

"He is not hers, she is not his," murmured Mr Potts to himself, as he brandished his club menacingly above his head, "He is not hers, she is not his," he repeated in an amused and disgusted tone of voice, "Lord, but I'm getting ahead fast, chuck full of information, bubbling over with it,— He is not hers, she is not his,— "Gods, that's a regular poem, an ode, a dirge an addle-brains elegy, that's what it is.— He is not his, she is not hers,— no, that ain't it. — She is not hers, he is not his. — no, that's wrong too, — She is not she's, he is not he's,— no, floored again. Now let's see,— if she's is not he's, then he's is not she's, no, no, then,— her's is not he's, he's she's and she's is not he's, and he's hers and she shers and,——— Say! look here now, don't ever try that again! I may be mechanical, but I'm also mortal.— See? So if you've got any more such gems of idiocy, save 'em,— save 'em,— don't spring 'em here but save 'em," and he ran his hand over his troubled brow to try and collect his scattered wits, and think of

the question he wished to ask next. "Oh yes," he ruminated, "Arline, — that's it. Where is she, that's the question? Now look here," he said, addressing his visitor, who weak and exhausted, was clutching at the wall in an effort to keep from falling, "I want you to tell me where Arline is, — where you left her? — See! that's the idea. Now, — where — did — you — leave — Arline?" he asked slowly and distinctly, as though more forcibly to impress the question upon the addled mind of his visitor.

"Leave her, — leave Arline?" he answered thoughtfully. "No, never! never! n-e-e-ver!!!" he shrieked, "She's mine, mine, I say, and she is waiting, and I must go, yes I must go, I've got two for her and one for me, and I must go," and he clutched wildly at his ruined bag of rolls and staggered toward Mr. Potts, who, fearing another tantrum, raised his club and cried, "Keep away now! Keep away! Or I'll have one for you, that you'll get right in the neck, and you'll get it hard — See?" and he shook his club menacingly, while his crazy visitor sank exhausted to the floor, murmuring, "I must go, I must find work — work, — there's work for me, yes, somewhere there's a place for me, a place for me, and I must go."

"Yes, I guess there is," answered Mr. Potts who, seeing the helpless con-

dition of his visitor, got courageous, and let his club fall carelessly to his side. "Yes, there's a place for you all right enough, and that place is a straight-jacket," and giving up all hope of being able to get any information from his visitor, he stood looking at his prostrate form, and wondering what he had better do with him.

As he gazed thoughtfully down at the floor, while revolving this puzzling question in his mind, he chanced to notice some bits of stained and water-soaked paper that had evidently fallen from his visitor's pocket during the scuffle, and stooping down he soon had them in his possession. They were soaked, soiled, and stuck together by the wet, but he soon pulled them apart, and found that they consisted of rent receipts, ~~and~~ newspaper clippings of "help wanted", and an envelope containing a photograph. A photograph of a beautiful young woman, whose wavy hair clustered gracefully about her smiling face, and whose lovely eyes seemed looking intently at him, with a kind but roguish expression.

"Aha!" he exclaimed in a tone of pleasure and surprise, as he looked closely at the picture. "A kind act is its own reward and the good Samaritan will be my guide henceforth

and to found an asylum for the addle pates, my only aim!"

While he was addressing himself thus, the poor demented man before him had lain muttering upon the floor, and apparently without sufficient strength to move, but as his wandering ~~gaze~~ gaze fell on the photograph, his face assumed its previous wild and murderous look, and springing to his feet, ere the startled and horrified Potts could raise his club, he rushed upon him, with arms outstretched and throttling him with a deadly grip of his bony fingers, forced him back upon the bed, where he choked and mauled him in a frenzy born of madness.

When Mr. Potts recovered consciousness some few minutes later, he was so confused in mind that he lay gasping on the bed for some moments before he could recollect where he was, or what had happened to him. The fact of his being sore, and bruised, and bloody, was so apparent however, that he was not long in figuring out what had occurred, and as he sat up, lame and weak, he looked fearfully around ~~him~~ for his murderous visitor, and upon seeing that he had fallen insensible by the bed-side, quickly arose and securing his club, gave a sigh of relief and proceeded to adjust the remains of his

clothes, and wipe the blood from his face.

Having shaken and mopped himself into as neat a condition as possible, he tiptoed silently about the room in search of the photograph, which he had lost during the struggle. He at last found it in the tightly clenched hand of his visitor, and being unable to pull it out of the vice-like grip, and also fearful of arousing him, he tore it in two, and with the larger portion in his possession, tiptoed silently from the room and locked the door.

Chapter 14.

Mr. Potts left his crazy visitor imprisoned in his office, and rushed away through the lonely, storm-swept street and into Crabs Court, which, as the hour was very late, was dark and deserted by all save a shaking old man, who stood silently mopping his face, and gazing upward through the storm.

Running down the steps to the cellar of Mr. Grip, he kicked and called loudly at the door, but receiving no response to his clamor, considered that he must be either drunk or away, and so went out and bent his steps toward the tenement in Broome Street, where he arrived in a short space of time and stood knocking for admittance at the apartments of M. Valère. The polite and smiling Louis at once answered his summons, and throwing open the door, gazed with astonishment and wonder at the disordered and battered appearance of his visitor.

"Ah! Evening, evening, sir!" said Mr. Potts as he entered the room and sitting down in a near by chair, commenced mopping his battered and perspiring face with his blood-smeared handkerchief. "It's rather late to be visiting and I am a,— well,— I'm a wreck, sir,— a ~~mere~~ mere mechanical ruin, but no matter, it's only one of the

misfortunes that is liable to happen to any man that lets his kindness of heart interfere with his commonsense and he looked at the beautiful portrait upon the easel, sighed, and continued, "Now, to come to the point, I believe I ~~once~~ mentioned to you that I had an interest in art.— Well,— I *did* have such an interest, and it was a —well,— a— a— what you might call a *living* interest in art,— that is, not exactly in art itself, but in the accessories,— the pots, the paints, the brushes, the varnish *and* occasionally the — the,— m— models, or to be more explicit, *a* —m— m— model. Now then," he continued, as he tapped his leg emphatically with the piece of photograph, "being as I *am*, or rather —*was*,— interested in a —a— m— m— model, I naturally come to understand the beauties,— no not beauties,— *peculiarities*,— yes, that's the word,— *peculiarities* of their natures, and therefore when I first saw that beautiful picture there (pointing to the portrait on the easel) I says to myself, here is a —a— m— model, and therefore here is a mystery, for that— m— m— models are mysteries is my experience, and my experience on that subject is —is— well,— it is certainly *an* experience," and he tapped his leg signifi-

cantly.

Louis,— who had been listening attentively to what his visitor said, — appeared to get more interested and somewhat excited as he continued, and stepping in front of him, made many low bows and wild flourishes of his arms as he said excitedly, "Sir! if you know anything about the lady or where she may be found, you will be well rewarded, but as for a mystesy, sir, there is none.— No! nothing, nothing, sir! The lady is gone her,— husband, is also gone, and we would like to find them."

"Just so," answered Mr. Potts, as he thoughtfully stroked his drooping mustache, "The lady is gone her — husband, is also gone. Just so exactly, but nevertheless there is a question, — just the mere matter of a thought, sir,— as to whether it <u>is</u> her husband as is also gone.

Louis got very excited at this unexpected remark, and said, "Sir! what I have told you is sufficient, and there is no need of entering into any further discussion regarding them; the only question to be considered is whether you have any information that will enable Monsieur Valère to find them, if so you will be well rewarded,— yes, richly rewarded"

"Richly rewarded," echoed Mr. Potts, as he scratched his ear with the piece of photograph, and looked up at the ceiling thoughtfully, "Perfectly natural and very proper idea,—and what sum might you consider as being equivalent to 'richly rewarded?'"

"Not less than a thousand dollars," answered Louis, who noted with disgust the crafty and avaricious look of his visitor.

"Not less than a thousand dollars, repeated Mr. Potts, 'Not less';—that means that it might possibly be more than a thousand,—don't it?"

"Yes sir; returned Louis, it might mean considerable more than a thousand, as Monsieur is a very wealthy, kind, and generous man, and will be only too glad to repay any one who aids him in discovering them."

"Kind and generous", murmured Mr. Potts, 'Very good habit sir, but rare,—quite rare, and sometimes just a little—well,—I might say, just a little wearing on the system," and he looked significantly and ruefully at his disordered clothes, and stroked his battered face reflectively. "Now it is not in expectation of receiving a reward that I have called here,—though from the present condition of my mechanism (which is a mechanical

wreck) it is certainly to be considered and expected. Here, sir, is a piece of photograph that I — well, — I might say, — obtained, — or — acquired, — from a certain gent, who knows a certain woman by the name of Arline, and who tells me that 'she's is not his, and he's is not hers," and he handed the remnant of the photograph to Louis, who looked at it in surprise and cried, "It is she! It is she! It is Arline! We will go at once! We will find her!" and he rushed to the closet for his hat and coat.

"Well, — hardly!" said Mr. Potts as he leaned back in his chair, and folding his hands behind his head, took another survey of the ceiling. "I hardly think we will go at present, or in fact — at all, — unless I am better acquainted with the mystery that — O no! — I forgot, — there is no mystery, — well then, — facts, — until I understand the facts surrounding the gent as is not he's, and the woman as is not 'she's. — See? Because my past experience with the accessories of art has taught me to be very careful about having anything to do with the — the — m — models, without first thoroughly understanding them, and to understand them is a mystery and a — a experience," and he tipped his chair

back and crossing one leg over the other, looked carelessly about the room.

Louis was loath to give his visitor the information he sought, but finding it was impossible to bring him to terms other wise, finally consented, on the condition that Mr. Potts should never mention what he was told, "for," continued he, "it is really nobody's business, and Monsieur Valère and I have kept the matter so close that I believe that no one other than yourself know aught about it. Now to be brief, the facts are these;— Monsieur Valère was born in France but came to America when quite young, and eventually won fame and money as an artist. He then married and went to live in a quiet village up the Hudson, where, in the course of time a son was born whom he named Jean. Jean was the only child resulting from their marriage, and as he grew to manhood was fairly worshipped by his parents, who gratified his every wish. About ten years ago the wife of Monsieur Valère fell sick and died, and he engaged a poor but worthy widow-woman for his house keeper. This woman also had an only child, ~~a~~ a little daughter.— Arline,— whom Monsieur Valère brought up and educated as his own, and a brighter, kindlier, and more beautiful

girl, I never knew As she grew to womanhood none knew her but to love her, and so what wonder that Monsieur Valère, — who is himself so kind and gentle in his ways, and fond of all thats good and beautiful, — should fall in love with her, and when, — about three years ago, her mother died and she was left an orphan dependent on his bounty, — he told her of his love, and she, — in gratefulness for all his previous kindness, — accepted him, and they were married. A year passed by, then Jean, — who had been long away engaged in study and travelling in foreign lands, — returned, and made the old house merry with his brilliant talk and kind but jolly ways, and joked and ~~tramped and~~ romped with Arline, whom he had not seen since she had grown to womanhood. Jean was as gentle and courteous as his father, and so resembled him in form and feature and all his kindly traits, that one might think of him as but Monsieur Valère grown young again. Thus, even as his father loved, loved Jean, and what wonder that Arline, — who was really but a child, — should see in him the qualities of the father, but made brighter and more beautiful by youth. As was but natural, — and being natural, is there-

fore right, regardless of the world's opinion, or of such vain people as consider their own small selves to constitute the world,— Arline returned the love of Jean, and love and reason being seldom found together, they reckoned not upon their future, but wandered off, as children stray from home, and Monsieur Valère blamed neither for their action, and told none save me the circumstances. On that same day we left the house, and started on a quest that's taken us o'er half the world. While in London, some six months ago, we chanced to find a poverty-stricken place where they had lately lived, and being told that they had gone to New York, we followed, and since arriving here, have made a tireless search in every portion of the city. That's all there is to tell.— You have the facts."

"Hm! The facts," echoed Mr. Potts "are very interesting, more especially so to me on account of their bearing out my own opinion and — and — experience, regarding the mysterious changeability of — of — m — m — models. We will now go and see the gent who is waiting in my office, and who is known to me under the name of Arens but who I now believe you will find to be Mr. — Mr. — what's his name — John, — Jonas, — Judas, —" "Jean!" put

in Louis. "O, yes!" continued Mr. Potts, "Jean,— I believe you will find the gent to be Mr. Jean Valère, and tomorrow I will have a talk with Mr. Guy, — an acquaintance of mine,— who will doubtless be able to tell me where to look for the — the — m — m — model, — that is,— Arline."

Louis wrote a short note to M. Valère, and leaving it upon the table, started out with Mr. Potts who repeated to him the circumstances attending his acquaintance with Mr. Arens, and as he told them they redounded greatly to his credit, but as for their correctness and truth,— well, — that is quite another matter.

When they finally reached the office they found that both the fire and light were out, and upon looking further discovered that Mr. Arens and a window sash were [redacted] likewise out, and upon going out themselves, they discovered a zigzag trail in the snow, that showed where he had staggered and dragged himself along the pavement.

As they were about to follow on his track, a man stepped quickly out from the shadow of the building, — a man both tall and stong, and who wore upon his long blue coat a double row of bright brass buttons.

"Mr. Potts, I believe?" said the stranger, half-questioningly, as he tapped the collector familiarly on the arm.

"Y—e—e—s, sir," slowly answered Mr. Potts, as he looked fearfully at the rows of shining buttons.

"Mr. John Bolivar Potts?" again queried he of the buttons.

"Y—e—s—s—ir", hesitated Potts.

"Mr. John Bolivar Potts, collector of rents for the estate of Million and Billion?" said the stranger.

"Y—e—s,—s—s—ir," again answered Potts, as he edged away and glanced longingly up the street, as though wishing to make a bolt for it.

"Well, Mr. John Bolivar Potts," answered the stranger, "I have got a warrant for your arrest on the charge of embezzling some of those same rents;" and he deftly slipped his twisters on the collector's wrist. As he hurried him down the street, a fat little man with a red handkerchief tied about his ears came running up, and taking a note-book from his hat, commenced to write therein, while the chill night wind moaned sadly by, and wafted back to Louis the words,—"good item sir! Very good item sir! Very excellent item in—d—e—e—d sir!"

Chapter 15.

Little Baggs sped up the shaking stairs and through the dark and silent halls, until she saw the tiny yellow line of light that streamed out beneath the door before her, and then tiptoeing silently forward, she gently knocked, but receiving no response, opened the door and entered.

Mrs. Supper and the twins were gone, and Mrs. Boozler, sound asleep and snoring lustily, sat with her chair leaning back against the wall, her feet resting on the table, and her pipe dangling idly from the corner of her mouth. The wind had forced the wad of rags from out the broken window pane, and the snow had blown and sifted in until the floor was carpeted with white, and a little drift had piled itself upon the bed.

As Little Baggs looked tenderly down at the fair white face of her patient friend,—so calm, and beautiful, and still,—the sound of the chanting choir-boys came stealing in through the broken window. The tears came welling to her eyes, and raising up the still white hand that pressed the sleeping baby to her breast, she held it lovingly in her own, but it thrilled not nor moved at her touch, and was so cold and pulseless that she sobbed aloud, and even as she sobbed she knew her patient friend had passed away, and that the

"better times" for which she hoped, were dawning in another world.

Gently she placed the nerveless hand beside the sleeping babe, and with a soft caress upon the fair white cheek, went silently from the room.

The old man stood as she had left him, silent, lone, and ever gazing upward at the little ray of light. She touched him gently on the arm, and he seemed startled at her silent coming, but taking her hand within his own, looked down at her, as though to read within her eyes what she would say. She looked up a moment at his pale and kindly face, then burying her head in his snow-coverd coat, wept aloud.

"I know it. — I — know it now, dear," he said with faltering voice, as he raised the tear stained face from off his coat, "come, we will go, we will weep togethet for thy friend. She has gone, dear, Yes, she cannot bid me come or stay away. I see it in thy sorrow and feel it in my heart. Let us go, dear, — lead me on," and hand in hand they sought the room from which the little ray of light shone dimly forth.

They entered softly and as they stood hand in hand beside the bed and looked upon the gentle, fair, young face of her who was so dear to both, they wept in silent sorrow; and when little

Baggs turned back the coverlet and showed the tiny babe that nestled there and still slept on, unconscious that the breast whereon it rested was cold and motionless, the old man stooped and kissed its little hand.

As they stood and sorrowed by the bed, a noise upon the stairs disturbed them,— a scraping, shuffling, [redacted] hesitating sort of noise, that seemed to stop awhile, then starting up again came nearer,— and nearer yet, until it finally reached the door, where it seemed to pause and hesitate again,— then fumbled with the knob.

The door swung slowly open, and there staggered in a wild-eyed snow-encrusted man, who held beneath his shaking arm the tattered remnant of a paper bag, and in whose hand was tightly clutched a little piece of torn and crumpled card. He hung a moment to the swaying door and then lurched forward and fell beside the bed.

"Oh! God! 'tis Jean!" cried the old man, as he started forward and tried to catch him as he fell. "My son! My Jean!" he wailed, as he knelt and raised him gently on his arm. "My darling, wandering boy! Your father speaks to thee, forgives thee, and loves thee as of old! Look at me dear! Look up! My

God, you cannot leave me too! No! No! Look up, and live, Oh, live for thy little child and poor old father, Jean!" and as he knelt and begged, he blushed the melting snow and tangled hair from off his brow and kissed him.

"She's—mine,—sh—e's—al-ways mine", stammered Jean, and as his eyes roved slowly about the room, continued in a voice so weak and broken it could scarce be heard; "Arline—is—al—ways—mine, and I—must—go," and he tossed his withered arm about, and moved his wet and weary limbs as though to rise, —"for—she—is waiting—she is watching, —and there is—a place—some place—for me.—She—is—waiting—and—will find—some—place—for—me,—and I—must—go."

The wind sighed softly through the broken pane, the little ballet-dancer, waved and fluttered on the wall, and faintly upward through the silent night, came the sound of the chanting choir; and as his father pressed him closer to his breast, he was going,—going swiftly and silently onward to his Arline,—and when the his restless eyes grew still, and his [redacted] nerveless, withered arm hung idly down,—he had gone, and she was his,—forever, ever his.

Chapter 16.

There is a certain place within the city's limits where those who lodge pay not, and where board is given gratis. In such a place stopped Potts, — Mr. John Bolivar Potts, late collector for the estate of Million and Billion, — and as he walked mechanically up and down his cozy little room of five by eight, he looked sad; and when he glanced about him at the thick stone walls, he groaned; — and groaned again as he squinted out between the heavy iron bars upon the door and beheld a vista of still thicker walls and heavier bars.

A few hours previously he had laughed to think how he was going to run away and leave the fair Mc Filicker to ~~mourn~~ mourn his absence and the cash she lent him, but now, since running anywhere, — other than in a five foot circle, — was out of the question, his only fear had been that she would turn the trick by leaving him, and so he groaned; and when the liveried hireling of the bastile brought him a bread and a battered dipper filled with foaming — water, he groaned again, and the burthen of his curse was, that "the principal and natural necessity of life" was lacking.

Mrs. Mc Filicker had the heart disease so 'bad' that the fears of Mr. Potts were groundless, and upon receiving

word of what had befallen her dear friend, at once came to his rescue. The ransacking of the Spider's den had brought forth several hundred dollars; and this, added to what was left of her savings from her laundry, was at once taken to the legal representative of the estate of Million and Billion, who very wisely concluded that the money in hand was worth a dozen collectors in jail, so made arrangements for Mr. Potts' liberation.

Now, although Mrs. Mc Flicker readily parted with her money to secure the freedom of Mr. Potts, she was quite unwilling to part from him for any reason whatsoever, and having in mind the failure of the "dead sure tip," and the consequent loss of her money, would listen to no "dead sure" matrimonial "tips" or pleas for delay upon the part of her dear friend, but insisted that he must marry her forthwith.

Mr. Potts was evidently "betwixt the devil and the deep sea"; but after revolving in his mind as to whether it was better, — or worse, — to be attached to a ball and chain for a year or so, or to [redacted] a woman for the rest of his natural life; finally consented to the latter.

"Of course I love you, Mariah," he said to his lady-love as he looked out at her from between the bars of his little

five by eight," and you know that I am not only willing, but anxious to marry you, and will do so at any time and place you may name, though I must say that to be married in a — a — place that is lacking in — in — in the principal and natural necessities of life, is — is — unnatural; and if anything should here after occur to inteifere with — with, — our hap — " (he was about to say happiness, but changed his mind and said,) married life," — you must not blame me, as I have warned you that to be married here, is — is — unnatural."

"It ain't for me as is to be your wife, to be a disputin' of your words", returned Mrs. Mc Flicker, as she jabbed her pocket handkerchief into the corner of her eye, "but they is so many slips betw- [redacted] ixt a couple of lips nowadage, that I begins to feel that what's a-goin to be did ain't never did till 'tis did, an' so I'll go an get some one as can marry us, an' it'll be did now," and she hurried off, and in the course of half an hour returned with a long, lanky, shabbily dressed individual, whose bright red nose beamed radiantly forth as though inflamed by drink, or warmed into a glow by an excess of Christian feeling for his fellow men

"The Reverend Mr. Gallibus, said Mrs. Mc Flicker, introducing him. "A gentle-

man as is in charge of the Topers' Mission"—("Tobias, mam," interjected Mr. Gallibus)—"in charge of the Tobias Mission, and who understands the necessaries of what is to be did."

The Reverend Mr. Gallibus set his seedy looking hat upon the stone flagging, and taking a tuck in his sleeves,—like a magician about to perform some dexterous sleight,—nodded pleasantly to Mr. Potts who looked at him dejectedly, and evidently considered the bright red glow on his nose to be a danger signal.

A witness being all that was necessary, Mrs. McFlicker looked around for some one willing to act in that capacity, and observing a fat little man with a red handkerchief tied about his ears standing near her and writing rapidly in a little note book, she interrupted him to ask if he would accommodate her by acting as a witness to a marriage.

"A witness to a murder, mam!" he replied as he hurriedly raised his hat and pulled therefrom a ream or so of paper, "Ah! to be sure I will,—with pleasure, with pleasure! A witness to a murder! That will be capital! Excellent mam! Let us go at once and I will write a very accurate and sensational account! It shall be a scoop, mam! An excellent item and a scoop for the columns of

the Daily What, whose circulation at the present date, mam, is exactly two hundred and twenty-seven thousand, seven hundred and twenty-seven copies per day, and at the same rate of increase, the circulation in the year nineteen hundred and twenty-five, will be seven hundred and seventeen thousand seven hun——"

Here he was cut short by Mrs. McFlicker having brought him to where Mr. Potts and the minister were waiting.

"Ah! not a murder after all," resumed the little man dejectedly, as he replaced the wad of paper in his hat, "but no matter, the world moves sadly on, and everything's an item, and between murder and marriage there's but very little difference anyway, except in the spelling."

Mr. Potts thought he agreed with the little man's remark, and upon taking a look at the approaching danger signal of the Reverend Gallibus, he was certain of it

"A——a——a——h——h——h! my friends the joyful moment is at hand," said the reverend magician, as he took another magical tuck in his sleeves. "The moment when two hearts, two bodies, two minds, two souls, ~~shall be united~~——a——a——a——h——h——h, two

spotless, stainless, blotless, blemishless, immaculate souls, shall be united and joined and connected, and attached by bonds, and cords, and ropes and knots, that will cling and tie, and bind and fetter, and hold them fast, until the world the planets, the goats, the universe, the heavens, the clams, and the — the — the many other things shall pass away," and removing his wapt gaze from the ceiling, he bestowed it upon the couple whom he was about to tie in such a wonderful and everlasting knot.

He then gave a final tuck to his sleeves and performed the ceremony with an air that seemed to say: "The show is on, gents, now watch me — watch me close, — the trick is about to be done, — one, — two, — three, — presto change, and now I've done it and the lady is Mrs Potts"

The reverend magician then kissed the bride, and with a parting nod at the down-cast Potts, picked up his hat and returned to his duties as pastor of the Tobias Mission, while the fat little man with the note book wrote a page or two of "facts" and went off murmuring, "Very pleasant item! Very interesting and ~~very~~ extremely pleasant item, in — d — e — e — d!"

In the course of time Mr. Potts was delivered from the confines of the little five-by-eight and with his happy bride departed for the tenement in Broome Street, and likewise in the course of time, the usual "true and accurate account" of the interesting events of the day were published in the Daily What, and foremost among the "pleasant items" was an account of the marriage of

"Mr. John Polivar Potts
and
Miss. Merrimack Flicker."

Chapter 17.

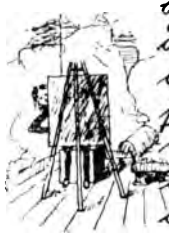
There is a place in Jersey City, known to sailors and longshoremen as Peg's Slip. A place where the smell of dock-mud taints the air, and anchors, chains, and coils of rope, lie strewn about. A place where the noise of ever passing drays of merchandise and the roar of falling coal is added to the bang and clamor of a near by boiler factory.

At number ten of this busy, noisy place, is a sailor's boarding-house, and the landlady thereof,—a skinny, sharp-nosed, red-haired woman of thirty-five or forty,—having a chronic thirst for the interesting happenings of the day, went out and purchased one of the "two hundred and seventy-seven thousand, seven hundred and twenty-seven" copies of the Daily What.

"Bars and Bolts
no Obstacle
to the Marriage of
Mr. John Poliver Botts
and Miss Merrimack Flicker",—read the landlady, and as she continued perusing the account, her face gradually assumed the same brilliant tint as her hair, and her nose appeared to get thinner and sharper than ever.

"This, then, is the climaxes to

my patience!" she cried, addressing a dirt-begrimed chromo on the wall opposite her. "The form devine has been debaseted and the altars of innocence and art has been destructed! — Cleopatrick!" she called, turning to a dark corner of the room, where a couple of skinny legs could be seen dangling down from ~~beneath~~ behind a large easel.



"Yessum"! came back a timid but quick response.

"Now, Cleopatrick — Apollo — Potts! don't you never dare to sit there and "yessum" me again when I speak to you. You come when you're spoke to, an you come on the instant or I'll give you the most artistic walloping as was ever given to a human child, since the form devine has been debaseted, and the altars of innocence and art destructed!"

There was a hurried movement behind the easel, and a tall, thin, pale-faced boy of twelve stepped ~~into~~ out into the room, where he cowered and bit nervously at the handle of a paint brush which he held in his paint-smeared hand.

"Cleo — patrick — A — pollo — Potts!!" Put down that brush! and if I ever catch you a bitin' and destructin' of your brushes again, I will

lam-baste you within an inch of your existence, for it is to be always and distinctly remembered, that the paints, the oils, the varnishes, the canvases, the brushes, and the models, are accessories of art, and ain't to be chewed up and spit upon, before the very face and eyes of a woman as has been debaseted, and has had her altars of innocence and art destructed!"

"Now there hangs a picture, Cleopatrick!" she continued, pointing to a nearby, fly specked chromo of a half-naked, red-headed Cleopatra, handing a bunch of cigars to a rakish looking Marc Antony, who was depicted as waving a green and yellow flag, upon which was printed in gilt letters, "Buy Bailey and Whalem's Cleopatra Cigars" — "A picture as I stood and posed for before I married that destructor of altars, as is your father! It shows you an exact production of your mother as she once appeared, and my form at that time, — as you can see by the picture, and as Bailey and Whalem's will testify to all, — was devine! Your birth and your father has succeeded in making that human form debaseted, and the altars of innocence and art have been destructed. But my

patience has been a endless wonder since the form devine was ruined, and even the destructor of altars, before he ran away and left me, would not have denied to me that my patience and good nature was everlasting, and if he <u>had</u> denied it. I should have given him just the most beautiful, artistic, allfiredest pounding that he had ever received since the form devine was debaseted and the altars of innocence and art destructed! My patience however, has now reached its climaxes, for I have discovered where your father has been hiding himself away for the last few years, and that he is still engaged in debaseting forms and altars, and has just got married again under the name of John Bolivar Botts! — <u>Cleopatricke</u>, put on your hat and coat, and we will go at once and show your animal father that the climaxes have arrived, and that he cannot add no more insults and injuries to me, whose form devine he has already debaseted and whose altars of innocence and art he has destructed!"

Chapter 18.

The afternoon of the day following the ceremony by the Reverend Mr. Galibus found Mr. Potts sitting, staring blankly at the cross-eyed cupid, while his bride sat upon his lap and entertained him with a history of the numerous virtues of the "angel one." She was so deeply interested in the subject that she paid no attention to the noise of several people ascending the hall stairs, or to the shrill voice of a woman crying: "Cleopatricke! Thy animal father is about to be visited with the sins of his wickedness, for there is never no escapes from the climaxes of a woman as has had her human form debaseted and her altars of innocence and art destructed!"

"Mariah!" interrupted Mr. Potts, upon hearing the voice of the woman, who had been 'debaseted,' "I warned you, that to marry me in a — a — a — place where the principal and natural necessities of life were lacking, was unnatural and would bring trouble, and I fear, — yes, — and I might say, I know, — that something is about to happen that will be a — a — trifle unpleasant, and — and — I might say an — an — experience. Now if there is a — a — back stairs, or fire-escape, or any other way by which I may make an — an — exit, I — "

"No!! John!! No!!" shrieked his

bride, throwing her arms around his neck, as he struggled to get away, "There ain't no exits in the house, not a single exit, and you can't exit away from your Mariah if they was mountings of them! John! Oh! John! be still, and tell me what's ailin' and a-irritatin' of you!"

During the struggle between Mr. Potts and his bride, a rapping at the door had been unheeded, and it was now thrown open, and there entered Cleopatrick, his mother, and a man wearing a long blue coat, upon the breast of which a double row of bright brass buttons glittered.

"Cleo — patrick — A — pollo — Potts!!!" screamed Mrs. Potts number one as she beheld the "destructor of altars" clasped in the arms of his bride. "See your animal father now! See him in the arms of that disgraceless woman, before the very face and eyes of a wife whose human form devine he has debaseted, and whose altars of innocence and art he has forever destructed!"

"John! — John Potts! Have you decepted and deceived me?" cried his bride, as her embrace of love changed to a grip of anger and despair, and she appeared on the point of throttling him in such a manner that if it had then been put in operation he would certainly have made his next "exit" as a corpse, "Have

you destroyed my fortunes and a-treaded on my good names? Speak!! Answer me that, or I will tear and claw you into a forty million atoms!"

"Mariah, my love, I told you that I feared that to get married in a — a — place where the — the — principal and natural necessi —" began Potts, when his further remarks were shut off by reason of his irate bride having started in to obtain the "forty million" souvenirs of his perfidy.

Mrs. Potts number one regarded the right of pounding the collector as being strictly her own, but not being able to reach him, and being exhilarated by the sight of battle and in just the right state of mind wherein she felt that it was absolutely necessary that she should pound somebody, she entered into the mad quest for souvenirs and trophies by laying hold of wife number two, and pounding her with all the strength, vim, and animosity, of a woman whose human form had been thoroughly debaseted and whose altars of innocence and art were forever destructed.

This left an excellent opportunity for the gentleman in buttons, who, upon seeing that the women had become so interested in clawing each other as to make it possible for him to lay hold of the collector without danger to himself.

pulled him out of the melée, and in a very unconcerned manner said, "Mr. Potts, I believe?" but as Mr. Potts had either forgotten his name, or was too bewildered to make reply, he continued, "Mr. John Bolivar Potts I have a warrant for your arrest on the charge of bigamy, and I believe we had better go as soon as possible, for the ladies are at present engaged in discussing some little difference of opinion, and to intrude or get mixed up in the private affairs of a family is very impolite, and" —— (here he ducked his head to avoid a wild swing with which wife number one was trying to finish both the bride and the argument) —"and sometimes dangerous."

They at once went out and as they hurried down stairs, Mr. Potts was saying, "They ain't no tellin' what a man's comin' to, sir, when he marries a — a — m — m — model. They's mysteries, they be, and to marry one is a — a — experience. Now that there m — m — model was just the nicest, quietest, good-naturedest kind of a woman I ever saw until I married her, and then — well, — then was where I discovered the mystery, for she kept her tongue a-waggin' so fast, and me a toin' the mark so strict, that I had to run off or be beaten and worried to an unnatural end, and so you can believe me when I say that

m — m — models are mysteries, and to be connected with a mystery is — is — an <u>experience</u>! Yes, a <u>h — l of an experience</u>!!"

Although wife number one was much smaller than her rival, she nevertheless got the best of the argument, and having mauled and scratched her adversary into a condition where the only existing "difference of opinion" was as to whether she was alive or dead, she grabbed Cleopatrick by the scruff of the neck, and as she marched him down stairs, said, "<u>Cleopatrick Apollo Potts</u>! You have this day seen your animal father and his wickednesses! You have observed to what a low degree a man will come, who deserts his wife and runs away from the paints, the pots, the varnishes, the canvases, the brushes <u>and</u> the models of forms devine that constitute the accessories of art! You have beheld the disgraceless woman with the form that was <u>not</u> devine, and you have witnessed your mothers patience and good nature come to a climaxes, and seen her pound that form that was <u>not</u> devine until it was exhausted, and it should be a lesson to you for life never to irritate the tender feelings of a woman whose human form devine has been debaseted, and whose altars of innocence

and art has been destructed! —— Cleopatrick Apollo! Step lively!"

As Mrs. Potts number two sat gasping for breath and looking wildly around upon the wreck ~~of~~ and disorder of her front room, she heard the sound of the crutch-stick as it came thumping up the basement stairs, and the mocking laughter of her friend Mrs. Gobber.

Now to lose both her money and husband, and then to be sat upon and pounded by a stranger, was sufficient misery for the time being, and to sit calmly down and be jeered at under such circumstances was out of the question, so she limped painfully out into the hall, and chancing to meet Louis, said, "Excuse me, sir, but it ain't for me as is the janitress to be a lettin' of my tenants be imposed and thieved upon. So when it becomes known to me that Mr. Velair gave my servants a letter to be called for, I says to myself that is very proper and obligin' and when I finds out that that same letter was called for and carried away by a woman as is named Gobber, an' who lives in this very house, I says to myself she is a thieves and I will tell Mr. Velair so he can have a chance to arrest her afore I order her out of the house."

"Oh, yes," returned Louis, "I remember that Monsieur Valère told me the circumstances of the letter,—but no matter about it, it was of no value, and she is welcome to it. You see, here is the way it was, Monsieur was going through the hall one morning when he chanced to overhear a little girl asking for some of her wages to buy food and medicine for her sick mother, and when he heard her mistress refuse to give it to her, he resolved to help her himself, and not wishing to offend her by giving her the money, he made her imagine she had earned it by sending her upon a fictitious errand. Oh yes, the woman is perfectly welcome to the letter, as I can assure you that there was nothing in it but a blank sheet of paper."

The janitress bit her lips with anger and shaking her fist under the nose of Louis, cried, "You're a sneaks! that's what you be, both on you, an' if you thinks it a smartness to be a corruptin' and a bribin' of my servants you'll find you are mistakenly mistook, an' I tells you now that I gives you a weeks notice to move outin this house, an' if you refuses to go you'll be banged and slammed into the street in a heaps!"

"Excuse me, ma'm!" returned Louis, as he politely tipped his hat. "We are go-

ing to move today, and I was just going out in quest of a furniture van when you accosted me. "Good day, ma'am!" and with another tip of his hat and several polite bows, he was gone.

Old Mrs. Gobber and her crutch-stick were close at hand, and the janitress turned upon her in a fury and shrieked, "You're a miserable sneaks too, that's what you be! You're a crawler an' a creeper, a regular one-legged snake an' a hyppocrittamus!"

Mrs. Gobber leaned back against the wall and between her bursts of mocking laughter, gasped out, "Mrs. Potts!— Mrs. Mariah Potts!— O! Lord, ain't we a lovely bride!— Wo—o—o—ow!"

"Sall Gobber!" screamed the "lovely bride," as she danced wildly about, "I'm done with you forever an' I gives you notice to pack up your dirty traps an' get out of this house instantly!"

"O! what a joker you be a gettin' to be, Mariah!" answered Mrs. Gobber as she wiggled and screamed with laughter, "You gives me notice to get out!— Me!!— O! Lord! Mariah, just to think what a joke that is! Whoo—o—o—oop!!! There's a lot of transpirin' bein' done these days Mariah, yes, barrels and loads of transpirin', an' when I looks about me an' sees this transpirin'

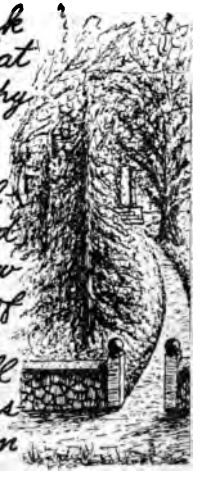
a-goin on I says to myself, says I, "Sall Gobber youre a gettin too old for hard work, you be, and they's goin' to be need of another janitress to this here tenement afore long, an' if you will just wake up from that trance in time, they ain't no tellin' but what you may be considered as just the proper person for the positions, so I goes to the new collector of Million and Billion an' I says, says I: "I'm just the artickle youse a lookin' for', an' he says, says he, 'Mrs. Gobber, we can't afford to have a woman as is married to a imbezzler for a janitress, an' therefore I appoints you to the positions', an' he writit it all out nice and neat for me to show to my dear friend Miriah, and she pulled a paper out of her pocket and waved it jeeringly in front of Mrs. Potts, who was so enraged and dumbfounded at this unexpected turn of affairs that she flopped down on the stairs, and clawed at her skirts and gasped for breath.

As Mrs. Gobber flaunted the paper in the bride's face, she fairly screamed with laughter, and cried; "So you'll turn me out of the house!- Whoo — o — o — oop !!! But I aint a goin' to be resentful and be a turnin' of you out Miriah! O, no! not for a worlds, but I must say that the rent of them two

rooms of yourin, from this day on, will be twenty dollars a month in advance, which is a very small figger when you comes to consider as how you have often declared as how them same rooms aint to be equaled in this house," and the old cripple almost doubled herself up into a knot with her jeering laughter, and as she hobbled down stairs screamed back, "Oh, my! O, Lord! What a bride! What a joke! Whoo-o-o-oop!! Look out, Miriah! Sall Gobber sleeps with her elbows, these days!"

Chapter 19.

There is a certain pleasant little village up the Hudson. — A quiet, peaceful little place, where hurry seems unknown and labor absent. — A place where the houses never seem to crowd and force themselves upon the view, but set back from the street at such a distance that 'tis a pleasure for the passer-by to spy them out amid their large and well-kept grounds.



In this quaint and quiet village resides Monsieur Valère, the aged artist, and if you would like to know which residence is his, just inquire of any of the villagers you may meet, and be they old or young they will direct you instantly and with pleasure, for they both know and love him for his ever-kindly ways.

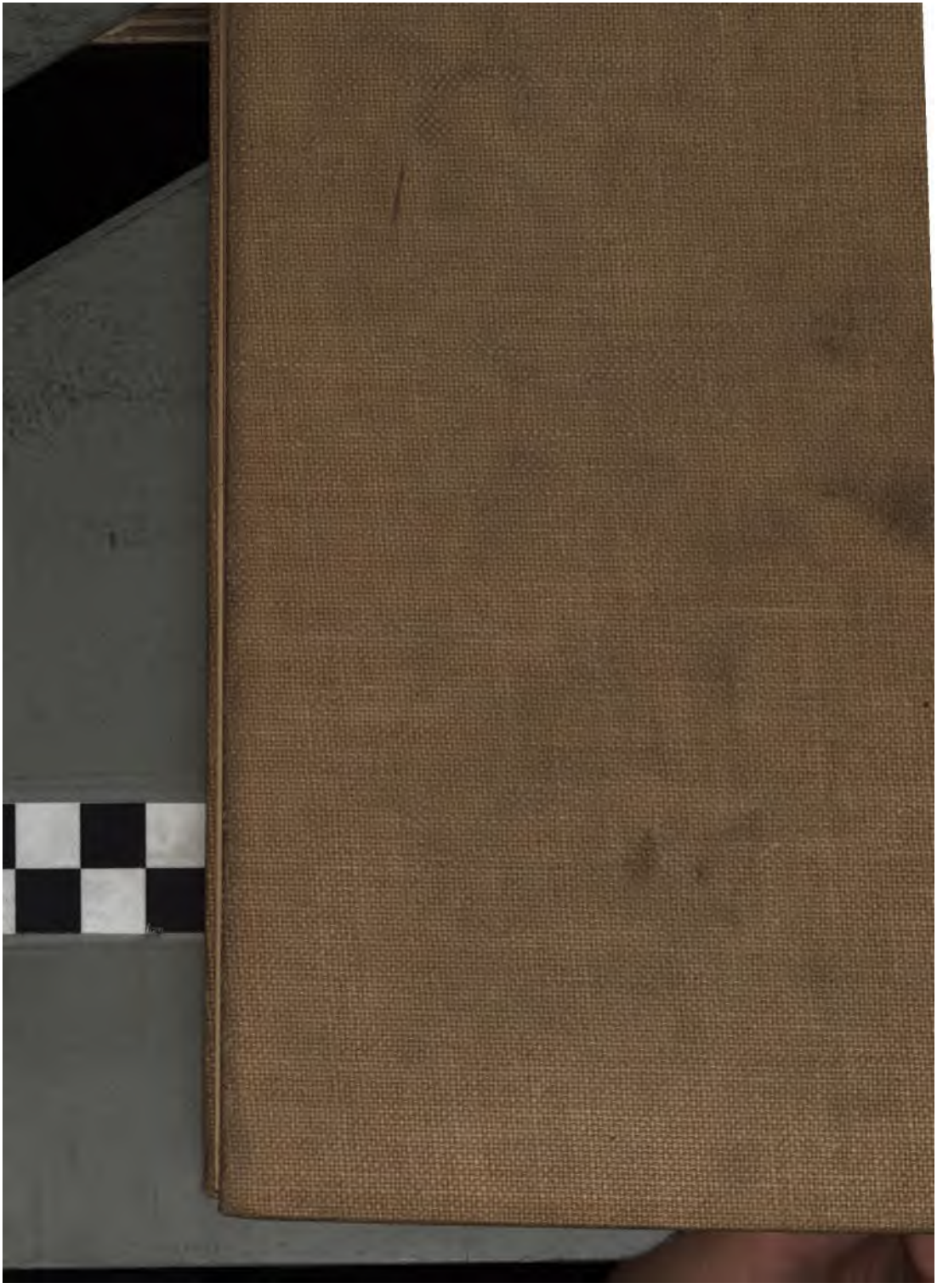
They love his "Little Queen" also — for when Monsieur Valère returned home from his travels, he brought with him a ragged, tattered, weary-looking little girl, whom he called his "Little Queen." She'll be a woman soon, will this Little Queen, and surely a kinder, brighter, and happier one it will be hard to find, for Monsieur Valère is having her brought up and educated as his own child.

But the Little Queen was not the only stranger that Monsieur

brought home with him, — there was another, — a tiny, wrinkled little baby, all wrapped about and swaddled up in some oddly fitting little garments.

Those little garments have been carefully laid away by M. Valère, and that tiny little baby, — well, — 'tis a baby no longer, but grown to be a sweet-faced, bashful little girl, who loves the dear old artist and calls him grandpa. They call her a baby yet, — "baby Arline," — and often on bright summer days the aged artist and his Little Queen, take baby Arline by the hands and stroll out through the pleasant grounds, and down the quiet, shady village street to where a little, low, stone church peeps out from amid the trees at an odd angle of the road. There are many grassy mounds within the shadow of the ivy covered walls of this old stone church, and here they often loiter and sit down to rest beside a single mound marked by a marble stone, whereon are cut the simple words: —

"Arline, and Jean Valère
rest here."

There are always flowers to be found upon this mound, for none knew Arline but to love her, and now that she rests here, there are few who pass who do not leave a token of their love.

and rare hothouse roses brought by wealthy ladies, and butter cups and daisies, gathered from the pleasant fields by village children, lie side by side.— Thus we will leave them, for even as Arline said, the "better times" have come to all,—yes,—even to the little paper ballet dancer, who is now ensconsed amid the costly furnishings in the chamber of the Little Queen and baby Arline, and ever flutters,—flutters,—flutters,—with every move of its little mistress.